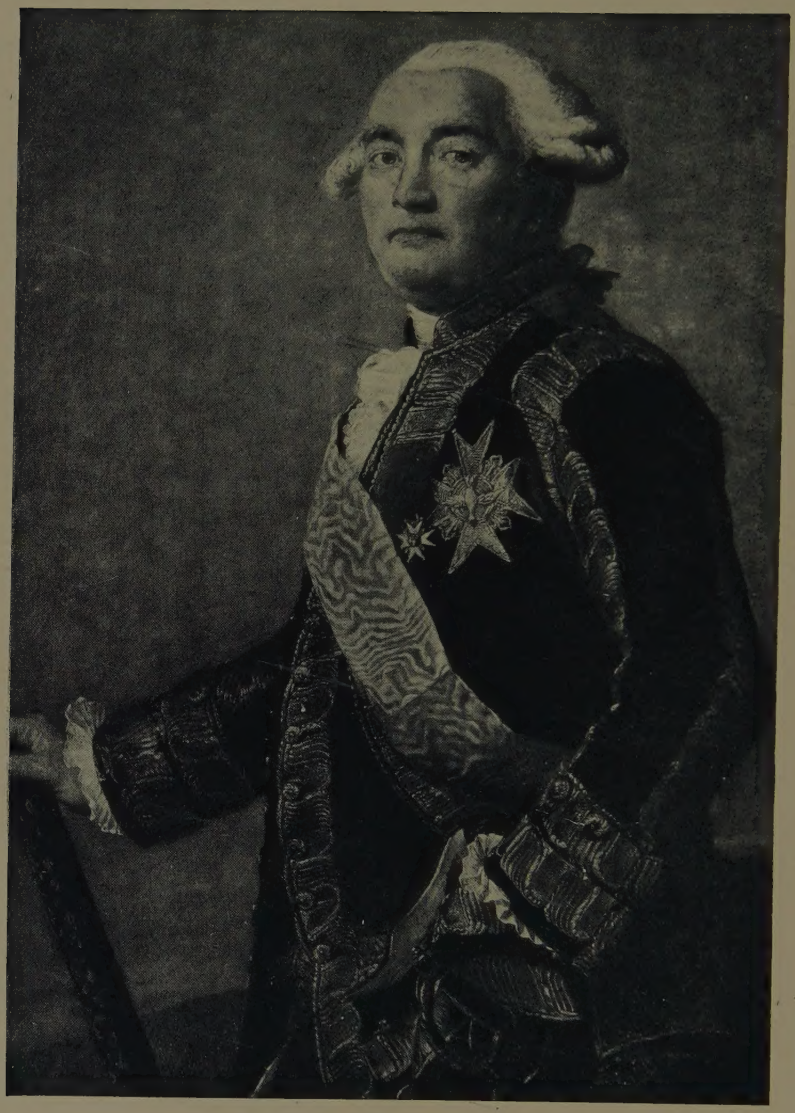
The Memoirs and Anecdotes of the Count de Ségur

THE MEMOIRS AND ANECDOTES
OF
THE COUNT DE SÉGUR



THE MARÉCHAL DE SÉGUR
By Mme Vigée-Le Brun

Frontispiece

THE MEMOIRS AND ANECDOTES OF THE COUNT DE SÉGUR

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PREFACE

COUNT LOUIS-PHILIPPE DE SÉGUR was born on the eve of the Seven Years' War and died on the morrow of the July Revolution, on August 27th, 1830. His life was spent in a period of great upheavals and radical changes, and the parts he was called upon to play were as varied as the systems of government under which he served. He was in turn colonel and diplomat under the old monarchy, ambassador extraordinary under the Revolution, Councillor of State under the Consulate, Senator and Grand Master of Ceremonies under the Empire and Napoleon, Peer of France under the Restoration, and in between, traveller, poet, historian, playwright and member of the French Academy.

He enjoyed the intimacy of Louis XV, Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, Washington, Frederick the Great, Catherine the Great, and Napoleon, without counting all the satellites that gravitated round these orbs.

A life so animated and replete fully entitles a man to write his memoirs, and gives him every chance of making them interesting. That Count de Ségur succeeded in doing so will be discovered by all who read his memoirs and recollections.

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The Memoirs of the Count de Ségur

CHAPTER I

The Youth of the Count de Ségur

AT THE age of twenty-two my father, the Count de Ségur, was already a distinguished man with the rank of colonel, and two honourable wounds. Finding favour in the eyes of a beautiful Créole named Mlle de Vernon, he married her. She owned a plantation with an income of twenty thousand pounds, which enabled my father to maintain his mode of life at Court on a level with the rank due to his birth and the services both of his father and himself.

Born in 1753, I spent the first years of my childhood and youth under Louis XV. That good, but weak monarch had been surrounded with a somewhat ill-deserved enthusiasm in his youth. No less exaggerated were the stern reproaches with which he was overwhelmed in his old age. Inheriting the absolute power of Louis XIV, he reigned sixty years without incurring a single reproach of cruelty. Such a distinction is very rare, and all the more remarkable in the history of Absolutism.

I was not presented at Court till three years after his death. Nevertheless I had been lucky enough to see and approach him long before. In 1767 the King had assembled a camp of 10,000 men at Compiègne for the grand manœuvres. My father was in command of the troops and although I was only fourteen years old at the time, he allowed me to follow him as aide-de-camp.

When the reviews and manœuvres were over, the King honoured my father by coming to supper with him. In accordance with the custom of those days, the person who received the monarch at his table had to stand behind his chair and serve him. My father was about to carry out this rule of etiquette, when Louis XV said to him: "You've served me long enough in war to take a rest in peace. Sit down next to me. Your son will serve me."

As one can well imagine, I seized the plate and napkin and took my place behind the King with all the vivacity of childish joy, which, however, surprised nobody. Indeed, since the fall of the liberties of the Roman world, the service of the prince has always been regarded as an honour in all monarchies. It has been decorated with the title of Office and Grand Office, and the princes of the royal family themselves hand the King his shirt.

The King spoke to me several times during the meal. At the end of the dinner he asked me what o'clock it was. I replied that I didn't know at all, as I had no watch.

"Ségur!" he said to my father, "give your watch to your son at once."

Perhaps it would have been more natural to give me his own. Anyhow, he sent me, next day, two fine

horses from his stables, and certainly no present could have been more acceptable at my age.

I always remember a little incident which occurred during that meal and greatly impressed me. The table was laid under an immense tent. There must have been about a hundred places. The dishes were carried by grenadiers. The place being so narrow and stuffy, the smell from these soldiers offended the delicacy of the King's olfactory organs.

"Those fellows," he said rather loud, "smell of old socks like the deuce."

"That's because we haven't any," a grenadier sharply replied.

A profound silence followed this remark.

Before the camp broke up, a deserter was condemned to death by the War Council in accordance with the law of that time. My mother hastened to throw herself at the feet of the King, and obtained pardon for the wretched man. Sédaine told me that it was this incident which induced him to write the opera *Le Déserteur*, for which Monsigny composed the music.

An incident of another and more fatal kind left an abiding impression on my mind. During the celebrations in connection with the marriage of Louis XVI with Marie Antoinette of Austria, my tutor took me with my brother to the stands erected on the Place Louis XV to see the firework display on the riverside.

At the end of the performance the immense crowd that filled the Place and the Champs Elysées made all at once for the boulevard, where a display of brilliant illuminations had been prepared. Through somebody's fault and negligence the workers employed to erect the colonnades had left several deep open trenches in the Rue Royale. Innumerable rows of carriages coming

from the two extremities of the Rue St. Honoré blocked all communication between the Place and the boulevard.

No care had been taken to prevent the disorder, while the watchmen were too few in number to offer any resistance.

In a spirit of stinginess the Merchants' Provost had refused the thousand écus demanded by the Maréchal de Biron for the purpose of appointing the Gardes Françaises to look after the public safety. A great number of rogues, cunningly taking advantage of this circumstance, banded themselves together and got in the way of the crowds moving along the Rue Royale.

In the midst of this confusion, which was soon increased by panic terror, several persons were pushed into the open trenches. Other victims fell on top of them. As the flood of people swelled more and more into this passage without an exit, the result was a general pushing, struggling, tumbling and stifling.

The first originators of this panic, the criminals loaded with plunder, perished in it themselves, after snatching the purses and watches of the men and the jewels and diamonds of the ladies. Six hundred dead were picked up from this bloody arena, while a like number of wounded and dying owed their lives to help that was late forthcoming.

I can still hear the shrieks of the women, children and old folk who met their doom piled up on top of one another.

Shortly afterwards, another scene was destined to stir my youthful mind.

In April, 1774, as Louis XV was on his way to the hunt, he happened to meet a funeral. Being fond of asking questions, he went up to the coffin and asked who was in it.

ANNE-MADELEINE DE VERNON,
WIFE OF THE MARÉCHAL
By Drouais

To face p. 14

He was informed that a young girl had died of small-pox. A sudden terror took hold of him. He returned to his palace and two days later was attacked by the cruel disease, of which the very name had filled him with dread. The attack was fatal. His blood began to decompose, gangrene set in, and he died. His body was covered with quick-lime and hurried off without ceremony to St. Denis. Forty days later, his obsequies were held, and he was placed with much pomp in the tomb of his ancestors.

The King's agony and death brought tears to my eyes. How great was my surprise on my going to Versailles and walking about the palace to find on all sides, in the town and in the gardens, not only a general indifference but even a sort of joy! The setting sun was forgotten; all worship was turned towards that which was on the rise. The old courtiers thought only of retaining their credit under the new reign; the young ones, of how to supplant them.

CHAPTER II

The Accession of Louis XVI

THE prince who now ascended the throne had already acquired a reputation for kindheartedness, an upright spirit and simplicity of manners. Endowed with all the charms of her sex, Queen Marie Antoinette had not only the dignified bearing that commands respect, but combined with it the grace that softens the pride of majesty. Only her features bore the stamp of Austrian pride. In all respects her speech and manners were pleasant, engaging and French. Weary perhaps of the etiquette to which Madame de Mouchy, her lady-in-waiting, tried to keep her in subjection, she was too fond of shaking off its tiresome bonds in order to enjoy the pleasures of private life. She felt the need of friends, a need very rarely experienced by persons in so exalted a position. It was, indeed, imprudent in her to give heed to the dictates of her heart.

A young king, whose chief defect was lack of self-confidence, and who appeared almost ashamed of his neglected education, and a queen of fine perceptions, though somewhat thoughtless and inexperienced, were hardly fitted to govern a nation so excitable, ardent and fond of glory and novelties, at a time when its finances were in disorder, and its mind disturbed, and all were

burning to wipe out the affronts of a disastrous war and to recover from the shame of a pleasure-seeking reign.

In this critical position the young monarch realised that he needed a guide, a support, a prime minister. He chose one, but the choice did not prove to be a happy one. Urged on by the numerous friends of the Duc de Choiseul, the Queen appeared pretty favourable to his recall, but the King retained this minister against strong prejudices, due to his father and the persons who had presided over his education. Louis XVI decided first of all to confide the reins of government to M. de Machault, a clever administrator and stern dispenser of justice. The despatch announcing his nomination had already been written and handed to the courier, when the King suddenly demanded it back. He had changed his mind. M. de Machault's austerity alarmed the clergy, whom he was desirous of keeping strictly within the limits of spiritual authority. The King's aunts persuaded him to nominate another prime minister. This was Count de Maurepas, who had been minister during the last days of Louis XIV when barely out of his childhood. His easy-going character and pleasant, light-hearted manner brought him many friends. His inclination to poke fun had led to his being in disfavour for a long time, but he had borne it with a carelessness that was accounted for wisdom. Owing to his great age he was reputed to possess a good deal of experience, and thus by the caprice of fortune, frivolity under the hoary locks of old age was put at the helm of the ship of State in the midst of dangerous rocks while storms were fast approaching.

M. de Maurepas was an octogenarian. He had been nominated minister at the age of twenty and fallen into

disgrace on account of a song directed against Mme de Pompadour, though falsely imputed to him. He had been an exile for twenty-five years.

I do not intend at this point to describe the policy and administration of the early years of Louis XVI's reign. I was too young to take any active part in them, that would have given me a thorough acquaintance with its movements. At that time I was only able to follow and see the Court and brilliant social life of Paris. All those who held places and offices about the Throne belonged to a different age from ours. Outwardly we showed respect for the old remains of an antiquated system, against whose manners and prejudices we laughingly plotted. By no means dreaming of relieving them of the burden of government, we thought only of amusing ourselves.

Though the forms of the edifice remained intact, we did not realise that it was being undermined from within. We made fun of the serious alarm shown by the old Court and clergy, who were loud in their denunciations of the spirit of innovation. We clapped our hands at the republican scenes in our theatres and applauded the philosophical discourses of our academicians, and the bold writings of our men of letters. Liberty, whatever its language, appealed to us by its courage, as Equality did by its convenience. There is a pleasure in stooping so long as one is certain of being able to raise oneself again at will. Thus with no foresight for the future, we enjoyed both the advantages of aristocracy and the sweets of a plebeian philosophy.

Nevertheless, brought up from childhood in the teachings of ancient chivalry, we found our imagination looking back with regret at those heroic, almost fabulous times. Indeed, one of the first struggles between the

old and young courtiers was due to an attempt on our part to revive the dress, customs and games of the Court of Francis I, Henry III and Henry IV.

It was not long before we succeeded in getting our ideas adopted by the King's brothers, the Comte de Provence and the Comte d'Artois, who were both ardent and active in furthering our cause. Our success was brilliant at first. Little was wanting to make it complete and to bring about the entire revolution of fashions. Our triumph, however, was as short-lived as a carnival. It was no sooner over than the old gentlemen re-established their ascendancy and the usages of Louis XIV and XV. So with the rules of the newly established discipline in our garrisons we were doomed to forget our too short dreams of knights and paladins.

This temporary vogue and attempted innovation had begun very gaily with ballets and quadrilles. The latter was made up of MM. de Noailles, d'Havré, de Guéméné, de Durfort, de Coigny, the two Dillons, my brother and myself, La Fayette, and a charming bevy of young ladies. Owing to the necessity of having frequent rehearsals, we were brought very often into the presence of the Queen and Princesses, and enjoyed free access to the apartments of the Princes. The gaiety attending these rehearsals and amusements was a cause of their frequency. The gravity of the old courtiers in high office prevented them from being admitted. Their presence and ceremonious manners would have saddened our joy.

In our opinion the various costumes we adopted were just as graceful and picturesque as modern French dress seemed to us ridiculous. Of all costumes we sought to adopt one which was best suited to a chivalrous,

gallant and fighting Court. The Princes chose that of Henry IV, and after we had worn it successfully in a number of quadrilles, we secured a decision obliging all who attended the Queen's ball to don that ancient costume.

Our vogue lived no longer than a carnival. As soon as austerity ousted pleasure, we were debarred from all informal entrance. Serious occupations took the place of amusements. The old Court dress won a triumph over our knightly costumes.

The following winter a strange caprice of fortune secured for me the favour of one of our princes. We were still in the period of pleasure so bountiful to youth. It was an imprudent outburst on my part which brought me the precious favour which lasted several years and was only interrupted by the great events which made so many other changes in the world.

I was at the Ball at the Opera. My face was uncovered and I was walking about arm-in-arm with a pleasant person in a mask which concealed the identity of a lady of the most distinguished rank. Suddenly a masked man wearing the Domino costume came up and without a word of apology took the lady from my arm. Surprised at his liberty, I brusquely took back the lady's arm, telling the stranger very plainly how much I resented his audacity.

He answered me in the same tone and as I was about to reply, he came close to my ear and said:

"Don't let's make a noise here. I'll give you an explanation elsewhere."

"That's unfair," I replied. "You know who I am, but you are unknown to me. Will you tell me your name?"

COMTESSE DE SÉGUR,
MOTHER OF THE MARÉCHAL, WITH HER GRANDSON,
VICOMTE JOSEPH-ALEXANDRE DE SÉGUR
By Carmontelle

To face p. 20

"That isn't necessary," he replied. "Are you going to the Queen's ball to-morrow?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Then I shall meet you there again," he said, and went away.

What astonished me most was to observe that, far from being alarmed by this quarrel about her, the lady only laughed and seemed to know the stranger, though unwilling to reveal his name.

Naturally, I was one of the first to arrive at the Queen's ball at Versailles on the following day. I went up to every person arriving, hoping he might be my man, but their friendly or indifferent manner promptly settled the question for me. At last I realised that the ballroom was full, though nobody had offered me the explanation I awaited.

Presently the inner doors opened. The Court made its entrance and the members of the royal family took their places. Then, before leading off the square-dances, the princes came towards us, addressing a few words to those they wished to honour in this way. One of them (the Comte de Provence) came up to me and said:

"Monsieur de Ségur, where are you staying in Versailles?"

I told him I was staying at the Hôtel d'Orléans and took the liberty of asking why he put such a question to me.

He replied in a low voice:

"In order to give you a little explanation regarding what happened at the Opera ball yesterday between you and a masked individual. I'm ready to give you satisfaction and leave you the choice of weapons, from a pin to a cannon, unless you would prefer to receive

the title of brother-in-arms, which would be the pledge of my friendship."

I broke into a thousand excuses and thanks, being as much astonished as satisfied to find such an adventure ending in so happy and unforeseen a declaration of friendship. From that time the Prince never ceased to treat me with extreme kindness. He frequently permitted me to enjoy his conversation, which revealed an extensive knowledge and a lovable nature. He allowed me to read some verses he had composed and deigned to rest his eyes on some of my relations. He decorated me with the royal order, of which he was grand master, on my return from America when I was about to set out for Russia.

While at St. Petersburg, I received several letters from him, in which he always gave me the title that had made me feel so grateful. Unfortunately, at the end of my five years' mission, France was in a state of upheaval and everything changed. On my return to Paris I saw the Prince but rarely. The evils of the time soon obliged him to quit the country in all haste.

My position, family and opinions induced me to stay in the ranks of those who hoped to save their country by remaining in it. Thus I was necessarily separated by these political storms from the Prince whose kindness had filled me with so much hope. I saw him no more till the Restoration, and nothing of that attachment remained to me but remembrance and gratitude.

However, in those early years Fortune smiled upon my youth. One might say that Fortune, like Nature, keeps all her flowers for Spring. My military advancement was rapid. Nominated sub-lieutenant in 1769,

and in the regiment, colonel-of-horse of the cavalry, under the orders of M. de Castries, my father's intimate friend, I was promoted two years later to the rank of captain. In 1776, at the request of the Duc d'Orleans, the King nominated me Colonel-en-second of the Orleans regiment of dragoons. About that time I chanced to be admitted into the intimate society of the Countess Jules de Polignac. Nothing seemed stranger to my ambition than that gentle relationship with a family of illustrious birth but remote from all the grandeurs.

The Countess Jules and her husband, as well as the Countess Diane de Polignac, her sister-in-law, led a modest life far from the Court, which they rarely visited. Their taste and character inclined them to prefer the gentleness of private life to the storms of the world.

It would be impossible to find a person with greater pleasantness of features, sweetness of looks, charm of voice and pleasanter qualities of heart and mind than the Countess Jules.

The Countesses de Châlons and d'Andlaw, her relations, the Count de Vaudreuil, the Duc de Coigny, a man of an original turn of mind, M. Delille, Baron de Besenval, whose French levity made one forget he was born a Swiss, were the members of charming parties at which the hours passed like minutes.

Sometimes they all came together at the house of the Duchesse de Bourbon, where little concerts were held in which the brilliant performers were the Countess Jules, Countess Amelie de Boufflers, Counts d'Adhemar and de Vaudreuil and the Duc de Guines, who played the flute remarkably well.

Affairs of state were very far from the thoughts of these persons and it would have been hard to foresee that a short while afterwards the Polignac family and their friends were to reach the summit of favour.

I have already mentioned that the young Queen had a heart yearning to love. She was looking for a friend who would be more attracted by her grace than by her power and would love her for her own sake. Struck by the looks of the Countess Jules, by the gentle expression of her eyes and the modest and open-hearted sensibility revealed by her attractive personality, she conceived a friendship for her which lasted till her death. Her entreaties conquered the modesty of Mme de Polignac. She came to the Court and was established there as a favourite.

The Queen appointed her husband first groom. Countess Diane was made lady-in-waiting to the Princess Elizabeth, M. de Vaudreuil was given the office of Grand Falconer, while M. d'Adhemar, appointed lord-in-waiting to the Princess Elizabeth, obtained the post of King's Minister at Brussels, and a few years later that of ambassador to England.

Naturally these favours created surprise at first and soon gave rise to envy. Yet even this envy was almost always disarmed by the gentleness, modesty and dis-interestedness of the favourite. Never was there one less avid and egotistic, and in truth, far from monopolising favours, pensions and offices, she preferred to get them for others rather than receive them.

Proof of this was forthcoming later on when a great scandal caused the illustrious de Rohan family to lose a great office. The Prince de Guéméné went bankrupt

LA COMTESSE LOUIS-PHILIPPE DE SÉGUR,
NÉE MARIE D'AGUESSEAU
By Mme. Vigée-Le Brun

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to the extent of twenty million, and his wife, who was governess to the royal children, was obliged to resign that inconvenient post.

The Queen then wished to entrust the education of her children to her friend. She was obliged to make great efforts in order to overcome her resistance and to constrain her to receive this high token of favour and great office, which was one of the first of the kingdom.

My intimate connections with Countess Jules, who later became Duchesse de Polignac, and with her friends, led to my participating in her good fortune. The Queen frequently saw me in the company she herself adorned so often, and with whom she usually spent her evenings. She grew accustomed to treating me with a particular graciousness, and her influence had much to do later on with the nomination of my father to the office of Minister for War.

M. d'Adhemar had agreed to the request of my father to take me to Strasbourg in order that I might follow a course of civil law. His regiment was stationed there, and it was in that town that we trained ourselves in the study of diplomacy, which till then was just as foreign to him as it was to me.

Returning to Paris, I plunged once again into the same whirlpool of fêtes, societies, balls, and all sorts of pleasures. Enjoying more and more consideration at Court, my father took steps to get a post in one of the royal houses for me. But I resisted his intentions, for I had no taste for that kind of service. The dreams of ambition had not yet begun to torment me. I preferred my freedom to a brilliant but tiresome slavery. Duty took me to Versailles, but inclination kept me in Paris.

Despite my age, it was not the gallantries and amusements of frivolous youth that took up the greater part of my time. I was eager for the society of people whose houses were the meeting places of the foremost thinkers and men of letters. I often went to the house of Mme Geoffrin and Mme du Deffant. Moreover, in many houses, such as those of Princess de Beauvau, Duchesse de Choiseul, la Maréchale de Luxembourg, Duchesse de Grammont, Mme de Montesson, at that time secretly married to the Duc d'Orléans, Duchesse d'Anville, Countess de Tessé, and my mother, I found conversation, deep or light, but always instructive and agreeable, whose charm is not to be found nowadays. It contained an indefinable mixture of simplicity and elevation, gracefulness and reason, criticism and urbanity. The latest productions of the brilliant minds who were the glory of France at that time were all eagerly taken up. The conversation found constant nourishment in the works of Bernardin de Saint Pierre, Helvétius, Rousseau, Diderot, Duclos, Voltaire, and Marmontel. Everything was discussed gently; disputes almost never occurred. And as everyone had a fine knowledge of the delicate art of pleasing, nobody ever bored by laying too much on anything. The precept most practised was that of Boileau, which teaches one to pass constantly from grave to sweet, from mirthful to serious. Thus it often happened that during the same evening, the subjects talked about alternated between the *Esprit des Lois* and Voltaire's *Contes*, the philosophy of Helvétius and the operas of Sedaine or Marmontel, the tragedies of La Harpe and the licentious stories of Father de Voisenon, the discoveries in India of Father Raynal and the songs of Collé, the politics of Mably and the charming verses of Saint Lambert or the Abbé Delille. The most dis-

tinguished men of letters were admitted with favour to the houses of the high nobility. This mixing of men of the Court and men of letters brought more enlightenment to the ones and better taste to the others. Never did Paris more resemble the Athens of fame. In submitting my early works to such good judges, I learnt through them how difficult is the art of writing.

No book could ever have taught me what I learnt in a few conversations with Marmontel and La Harpe concerning the forms of style and the secret means of eloquence, with Boufflers on the art of leading up naturally to a pithy and happy conceit, with M. de Beauvau and Suard on correctness of style, with the Duc de Nivernais on fineness of touch, the shades of gracefulness, and delicacy of taste, while the Abbé Delille enlightened me on the means of grasping in our imagination the magic wand that brings everything to life.

In this respect I will quote just one instance. It was asserted in the presence of the Abbé Delille that since the French language had no long and short vowels like Greek and Latin it was not so well suited as they for verbal painting by its accent, and that, briefly speaking, it lacked imitative harmony.

On the other hand the Abbé claimed that our language offered to real talent all the resources it could desire, and that its imitative harmony could not only paint the differences but also the nuances of objects. In order to prove this he quoted his own verses:

> Peins-nous légèrement l'amant léger de Flore;
> Qu'un doux ruisseau murmure en vers plus doux encore.
> Entend-on de la mer les ondes bouillonner?
> Le vers, comme un torrent, en roulant doit tonner.

Qu'Ajax soulève un roc, et l'arrache avec peine,
Chaque syllabe est lourde et pesamment se traine.
Mais vois d'un pied léger Camille effleurer l'eau:
Le vers vole et la suit, aussi prompt qu'un oiseau.*

To the charm of his verses the Abbé Delille added that of reading them with a perfection that was seductive.

The art of reading well has become much rarer in France. People do not know how to vary their intonations, make them ring true with strength and naturalness. I followed the advice of La Harpe, Delille, and my mother, whose judgment was always enlightened by a sure and delicate taste, and I took many lessons from the famous actor, Le Kain, in order to learn to read and speak well.

Brought up in the principles of a military monarchy, in the pride of a privileged nobility, in the honours of the Court and the maxims of piety, carried away on the other hand by the licence of the age and a boastful gallantry, made eager for liberty by the writings of the philosophers and the speeches of parliaments, we had no sure aim in view, no definite principles. We wished at one and the same time to enjoy the favours of the Court, the pleasures of the town, the approbation of the clergy, the affection of the people, the applause of the philosophers, the fame of literary success, the favour of the ladies and the esteem of virtuous men. This divergence of ideas necessarily brought about a confusion which

* Lightly paint for us the light lover of Flora,
So let a gentle brook murmur in gentler verse.
Wouldst hear the rumble of the ocean's waves?
The verse like a torrent must thunder and roll away.
Let Ajax lift a rock with mighty straining power,
Each syllable is heavy, dragging weightily.
But see Camilla's light foot skim the water's glow.
The verse takes flight and follows her more swiftly than a bird.

PRINCE POTEMKIN

Engraved by Mansfeld le Jeune

To face p. 29

penetrated to the heart of the Court. The King's aunts stood for the pious and stern customs of the end of Louis XIV's reign. M. de Maurepas represented the soft epicureanism of the Regency, while Comte du Muy, the War Minister, recalled the courage, severity and devotion of the knights of old. M. de Miroménil, Keeper of the Seals, represented the old, almost servile dependence of certain magistrates under Absolutism, while M. Turgot displayed the spirit of those wise humanitarians, more citizens than courtiers, who desired by means of great reforms to bring relief to oppressed peoples and secure the triumph of the public interest over that of private individuals, of justice over arbitrary government, and of principles over prejudices.

The influence of the League was still to be seen in the form of the parliamentary parties, the opinions of several peers and magistrates and even a prince of the blood, the old Prince de Conti. The party upholding devotion and despotism still had its adherents, among them the Marsans and d'Aiguillons. The Duc de Choiseul's party united under its banners all that was brilliant in the system of the old monarchy and in that of the innovators.

In the midst of this general unsettling and clash of opposing views, the good King Louis XVI and the young queen were seeking for truth, wishing to do good, and dreaming only of the public welfare without foreseeing their fatal end.

Louis XVI was the best-willed man in his kingdom. Strength alone was lacking in his rare qualities. In the midst of so many burning passions, schemes for innovations and a general need of change, his easy-going kindness carried him too swiftly away towards the numerous rocks that had emerged from that troubled

sea and were to bring about the ruin of our ancient monarchy.

Each one desired no more than to repair the old edifice, and all of them, in laying hands on it, brought it to the ground. Too many people brought their lights and thereby caused a fire.

In spite of my friendship for the new favourites at Court, I continued to prefer Paris to Versailles. Summer and duty alone took me from it. But in the garrisons I usually spent my leisure hours in study.

CHAPTER III

In the Regiment

THE army of those days was not like that of to-day. Certainly there was the same desire to distinguish oneself, the same eagerness to serve country and king; officers showed the same assiduity in military duties and exercises. But the composition of the army was different and the system of subordination was much stricter than at present.

Regiments were only completed by enlistment, so that instead of seeing under the colours the sons of all classes, called up by conscription and a general law, one found young people, most of whom had merely decided to enlist owing to some trouble or laziness. No prospect of advancement was offered them, and only very rarely did a soldier or N.C.O. become an officer. The very small number of those who chanced to succeed in this respect only got there after long years of service. The name they bore stressed the rareness of such good luck. They were called Officers of Fortune. Nobles alone had the right to enter the service as sub-lieutenants.

This ancient custom came from the feudal system and the prejudice which prevented French gentlemen from entering any other career but that of the Army, Diplomacy, or the Magistrature.

Owing to this relic of our old customs it was very hard to maintain a complete subordination among the officers, who were separated, it is true, by the hierarchy of rank, but as noblemen looked upon one another as equals.

Everyone showed respect to his Head at the manœuvres, on parade and during the hours of service, but at all other times and in all other places there was very little trace of subordination.

Coming to town or the Court, they sometimes found themselves in inverted order. A colonel, a provincial gentleman, would find himself inferior in rank to his young captains or sub-lieutenants who occupied Court posts or were decorated with illustrious names, such as Montmorency, Rohan, Crillon, etc.

A striking instance of this was to be seen in my regiment. The colonel, who commanded it under the orders of M. de Castries, was a poor gentleman of Gascony named le chevalier Dabeins, who had grown old in the lower ranks. He counted under his standards seventeen sub-lieutenants à la suite, such as the Prince de Lambesc, of the house of Lorraine, grand écuyer de France; the son of the Duc de Fleury, first gentleman of the Bedchamber; counts de Matignon, de Roncheroles, de Balbi, in a word, the most brilliant youth of the Court.

M. Dabeins knew how to keep our rowdiness within bounds and even to humiliate our vanity on occasion. Thus he loved very often to treat us carelessly before a large public at the grand manœuvres, speaking to us in this way: "Monsieur Fleury, Monsieur Lambesc, Monsieur Ségur, you manœuvre like blockheads. I will send you into the shade to ripen your brains." At the same time he would address the officers of fortune, saying: "Monsieur de Carré, Monsieur de Créplot,

COMTESSE L.-PH. DE SÉGUR
NÉE D'AGUESSEAU
Bust by Houdon

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Monsieur de Roger, you have carried out my orders splendidly. One sees that you know how to command as well as obey."

Generally these praises and reproaches were not too justly distributed. But the result was always pretty good, since it raised the humble and put down the proud.

It is obvious that in spite of the severity of some Heads, out of the service, it was becoming very difficult to maintain a proper subordination among so many young noblemen accustomed from childhood to consider each other as equals and believing themselves made to command others. The middle classes often had cause to complain of their arrogance in the garrisons and quarters.

However, the spirit of equality had for several years been spreading throughout the nation. In a good number of towns such as Toulouse, Lyons, Besançon and Strasbourg, the courage of a good many young students had forced the patricians by a series of duels to admit that the level can be re-established by the sword when honour demands it and justice fails to grant it.

Generally the upper nobility and courtiers gave less cause for complaint than the provincial nobility, who were poor and ill-educated. This is not surprising, for they possessed nothing but their titles, which they incessantly opposed to the very real superiority of a middle class, whose wealth and education inconvenienced and humbled them.

A man of the Court was almost always recognised by his urbanity, and it was mostly among the young country gentlemen that disdainfulness and touchiness were to be found. These quarrelsome spirits were the

most difficult to govern. Unwelcome in middle class societies, and with nothing to keep them occupied in their rooms, they spent their leisure in the café, at billiards or the show.

There was a good troupe of actors in the town of Lille. The young lieutenants and sub-lieutenants of the garrison went so early and assiduously to the comedy that the captains and higher officers were often unable to get places in the first boxes on their arrival.

Informed of what was happening, the King's lieutenant at Lille took an ill-advised step, contrarily to his custom. He forbade the lieutenants and sub-lieutenants to occupy the first boxes until the end of the first act.

Such an order astonished and dissatisfied everybody. The captains of the garrison all agreed, in order to console their young comrades, to share their lot and not to occupy the places the latter were forbidden to occupy.

Having been several days in the country, I was unaware of the order and its effect. I arrived at Lille just as the show was about to begin. I went into one of the first boxes, rather surprised to find it empty, as were also all those in the same row. My surprise increased on seeing all the chairs of the boxes covered with hats. They belonged to the lieutenants and sub-lieutenants who had reserved their seats in this way in order to circumvent the order. As the box I entered was a large one, I drew up a chair between two others at the front, and sat down, being very surprised at the emptiness of that space while the rest of the theatre was full.

I was still more astonished at the end of the first act. All the doors of the first boxes opened and a crowd of officers entered.

One of them, M. de Villeneuve, lieutenant of the chasseurs in the Dauphin infantry regiment, sat down next to me and said:

"Monsieur, you have knocked down my hat that was lying on this chair."

I had, indeed, inadvertently knocked it down as I took my seat. I made a polite excuse, but he answered me in a very bad temper that such impertinence was not to be made up for by a bad excuse. I replied that after the show he would have a serious explanation and perhaps one that would be less satisfying to himself.

Having agreed on the matter, he remained silent; but as he was young and impatient, he was unable to wait till the end of the performance. At the end of the first piece, he rose and beckoned to me to follow him. As I was going out, a young lieutenant of my regiment, Comte d'Assas, who was standing behind me and wanted my place, said to me: "Ségur, you're going away," and repeating the words of a comic opera, added: "Never to return again, never to return again."

"You're mistaken," I replied.

As soon as I joined my rowdy lieutenant at the bottom of the stairs, we went out together. When we reached the Place d'Armes, having a good heart as well as light and lively spirits, he said to me after a few moments' reflection:

"Really, we're big fools. We're going to cut each other's throats for a trifle that's not worth the while . . . for a fallen hat."

"A very just remark," I replied, "but somewhat late. I haven't the honour of knowing you. The wine is drawn. It must be drunk."

"As you please," he said. "Let's go outside the town."

"No," I replied. "It's late. The one of us that gets wounded mustn't remain without help in the fields. Let's go and fight on a bastion."

He pointed out that it was strictly forbidden and liable to severe punishment.

"Very well!" I replied. "What does the prohibition matter? If follies are done, the shortest are the best. It will soon be over. Let's go."

Entering a bastion, we doffed our coats and drew our swords. As my adversary was ardent and sprightly, he rushed at me with a single bound so promptly that I hadn't the time to parry. I felt a wound in my side. Happily his impetuosity had caused him to miss my body and it was the guard of his sword that had touched me.

"Heavens!" I said to myself. "D'Assas was foretelling the truth."

I charged at my adversary in return and in plunging gave him a blow with the sword. The point went into his body and stopped on a bone. He wanted to continue, but the pain prevented him from keeping firm on his legs. That gave me too much advantage. I proposed we should give up the fight. He agreed and accepted my arm in order to walk.

We returned to the town. The light of a lamp showed me that he was covered with blood, and I could, not help reflecting sadly on the cruelty of our prejudices. Presently we found a cab. I got him into it with some trouble and wanted to sit next to him, but he refused absolutely.

Thinking his refusal was due to an undying grudge, I expressed my surprise.

THE MARQUISE DE SÉGUR,
WIFE OF THE MARÉCHAL
Water Colour by Carmontelle

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"You judge me wrongly," he replied. "I may be rash, rather odd, pretty stubborn even, but I am very far from bearing you a grudge. On the contrary, I want to punish myself more than you have done. All the wrong is on my side. I provoked you without reason and I ask that you should go back to the comedy, if only for ten minutes, and re-occupy the seat that we have quarrelled about. After that, you may come back and look after me if you like. I should be honoured and delighted. Otherwise my mind is quite made up. We shall never see each other again." It was useless for me to tell him I couldn't leave him in his plight, not knowing whether the wound was mortal or not. He closed the door and gave me his address.

To satisfy him, I went to the comedy. I took my seat back from d'Assas, telling him about my adventure and reminding him of the fine prediction he had made without realising its truth. A quarter of an hour later, I went to the wounded lieutenant's house and found him in great suffering but not in danger. By the end of three weeks he recovered and told the story to all his comrades. It had a remarkable result. The order was withdrawn ; there was no quarrelling over seats and a good understanding was restored between the officers of different ranks.

This adventure ended my stay at Lille, for three weeks later I received together with the news of my nomination to the post of second in command of the Orleans regiment of dragoons an order from my father to join him in Franche-comté, of which province he was the commandant.

I felt a very great satisfaction in witnessing the veneration which my father inspired in his regiment and noting to what extent his noble frankness, aided by the

spirit and grace of my mother, had been able in so little time to restore peace and quiet in a stormy region, and to establish at least in appearance a satisfactory harmony among the military forces, the magistrature, the administration and the bourgeoisie.

CHAPTER IV

The Awakening of Liberty

THE same year I went to take the waters at Spa, which was then the fashion. Spa was the café of Europe. Crowds gathered there from all countries under the pretext of regaining their health, but their real aim was looking for pleasure. There was more freedom to be enjoyed there than in any other country of the world. The Bishop of Liège, who was sovereign of the country, was too small a prince to impose his laws and customs on the travellers. A hundred veterans in his pay were not a very effective police, so French, English, Dutch, Germans, Russians, Swedes, Italians, Spaniards and Portuguese all lived there according to the manners of their own country, and the variety of customs had a charm of its own.

It was during my stay at Spa that I first heard of the events which pointed to an approaching revolution in America. The first theatre of that bloody struggle between Great Britain and her colonies was the town of Boston.

I remember that the Americans used to be called the Insurgents and Bostonians. Their courageous audacity thrilled the minds of the public and aroused general admiration, especially among the young people who were fond of novelties and eager for a fray. And in

that little town of Spa, where chance had brought together so many travellers or accidental and voluntary deputies of all the monarchies of Europe, I was particularly struck by the way everybody took a lively interest in and concern for the revolt of a people against their king.

The American insurrection became a sort of fashion. The English game of whist was suddenly replaced in the drawing-rooms by a game no less grave called Boston. I was far from being the only one whose heart beat fast at the sound of the threatened awakening of liberty seeking to throw off the yoke of arbitrary power.

On my return to Paris I was struck by the same agitation of people's minds. Nobody was favourable to the English cause, and on all sides people expressed their support of that of the Bostonians.

Nevertheless, in spite of the love of liberty that was spreading in France, inequality still existed entire in rights, laws and privileges. In practice, however, it was being softened down every day. Institutions were monarchical, but manners were republican. Public charges and functions continued to be the monopoly of certain classes, but outside the exercise of these functions, equality began to reign in social relationships. Literary titles were often given the preference over titles of nobility. The Court alone retained its habitual superiority. But as French courtiers are more the servants of fashion than of their prince, they found it fitting to descend from their rank and to pay their court to Marmontel, d'Alembert, Raynal and others in the hope of raising themselves in public opinion by this rapprochement.

It was this spirit of equality which constituted the chief charm of social life in Paris and attracted crowds of foreigners from all countries.

All the German princes, though sovereigns at home, were treated by French gentlemen as their equals. For instance, no difference was made between Prince Max de Deux-Ponts, now King of Bavaria, and the French gentlemen who served or lived in company with him, for he was then in the service of France.

Electors and sovereigns, even those of the third class like the Duc de Deux-Ponts, who were unwilling to accept this equality and yet desired to enjoy the pleasures of Paris life, got round the difficulty by travelling incognito. That is why the Duc de Deux-Ponts took the name of Comte de Sponheim.

What I have been saying regarding the German princes reminds me of an adventure I had following a quarrel which the Prince of Nassau picked with me, for no reason whatever, at a dinner given by the Prince de Deux-Ponts who was staying in modest style at the Hôtel du Parlement d'Angleterre in the Rue Coq-Héron.

To explain the motives of this quarrel it is necessary to go back a little.

One or two years before the time I mention, I happened to meet the Prince de Nassau one morning on the Terrace des Feuillants at the Tuileries. He was walking quickly and I tried in vain to stop him.

"I'm in a great hurry," he said. "Prince F—— de S—— has chosen me as a second in a duel that's going to take place immediately in the Champs Elysées between him and the chevalier de L——. If you want to see the fight, come with me."

I consented, for I was rather anxious to see the prince in the field. By his slowness in making up his mind in all sorts of matters he had gained a rather doubtful reputation as regards bravery, though there was perhaps no man of his time who had figured in more encounters.

We came out of the Tuileries and entered the great avenue of the Champs Elysées. We saw two carriages stop at some distance before us and our two champions got out with their swords. They walked along and we hurried to overtake them. The distance, however, was pretty great, and there were a good number of strollers. Before we could reach the place where they stopped, we were cut off from them by a fairly large crowd.

Then we heard a great tussle. Running forward, we arrived in time to see the rather strange outcome of the fight. One of the combatants held the stump of his broken sword, while the other was striking at him with his. Both were accusing each other of having violated the laws of combat. One declared that he had slipped and fallen, breaking his sword, and that his adversary had tried to pierce him through although he was disarmed. Which he would have done, had not his valet come to his aid. The other maintained that, without waiting for him to be on his guard, his enemy had wounded him slightly in the lower part of the back, and that his enemy's valet had unlawfully interfered in the fight.

The crowd around them was too divided in opinion to throw any light on the matter. On all sides there were cries of "Murder! Assassins!" without indicating who was guilty. The crowd grew bigger every moment and the last comers, who had seen nothing at all, were far from shouting the least.

The seconds defended the cause of their friends with somewhat partial liveliness. At last some of the spectators prevailed upon the two adversaries and their friends to put an end to the scandal. Both were wounded. The seconds led them back to their carriages and they went their ways.

This adventure gave rise to a good deal of talk. In the evening I received a note from the aged father of the Prince F——. He had heard that I had been a witness of what had happened and begged me to write my opinion on the subject, being persuaded that it would be favourable to his son.

Prince de Nassau endeavoured in vain to get me to accede to this request. I refused, stating that it was for the seconds of the two parties to give their evidence of the strange affair, and that being only a chance spectator, and late on the scene with its great tumult, I was unwilling to give an opinion that might be to the disadvantage of one or the other of the parties. My reply displeased Nassau and from that day there was a certain coldness between us.

We were still in this mutual state of mind when we chanced to dine together, in the company of twenty other guests, with Prince Max de Deux-Ponts. The meal was well forward, when one of the guests, M. de S—— B——, a young man with a good heart and fine spirit, but with all the ardour and lightness of his age, entered the dining-room, offered his excuses for his delay to his host, and sat down beside Prince de Nassau.

The latter chaffed him for his laziness. M. de S—— B—— replied in the same tone that he had been kept back by a quarrel he had just had with a German prince and that he had nearly thrown him out of the window.

Instead of laughing at this singular levity at the table of a German prince, spoken next to a prince of the same country, Nassau, who was very irascible by nature, took great offence, declaring that when one spoke in that way one should at least name the prince in

question. M. de S—— B—— replied that the quarrel had been between himself and Prince F—— de S——.

Seeing that Nassau's face was getting purple, I thought I might avert a threatening altercation and said: "Monsieur de S—— B——, you are wrong. Prince F—— would not allow himself to be maltreated so easily as you imagine. I saw him put up a very lively fight some months ago in the Champs Elysées."

Instead of appeasing Nassau's wrath, my words drew it upon myself. "Monsieur!" he said, rather loudly. "You were unwilling to talk about that matter when you were requested. So at present you had better keep quiet." I replied that he would never be the man to make me do so. The persons between us made haste to stifle our voices and to interrupt the conversation.

After dinner, I approached Nassau quite calmly and said to him:

"You made an offensive remark to me because your temper prevented you from reflecting properly. You are ten years older than me. Your reputation is established and more than established by a score of combats. Mine is only just beginning. You realise that I have a right to satisfaction, and there are two kinds. You can wipe out everything, if you wish, by saying before your fellow guests, who are all your friends, that you blame yourself for your outburst, having had no intention of offending me. If I don't obtain that satisfaction, you know I shall need another."

"I've none to give you," he replied brusquely.

"Very well," I answered. "I will be at your house at seven o'clock to-morrow morning to ask you to explain your strange behaviour."

VICOMTE DE SÉGUR
Bust by Houdon

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After that we parted.

In order not to be prevented by any unforeseen obstacle, I refrained from returning to my parents' house. I wrote to them that I had been obliged to leave for Saint Germain. Vicomte de Noailles had been present at that scene, so I chose him for my second and asked another of my friends, the Duc de C—— to put me up for the night. Vicomte de Noailles came for me next morning at half past six in order to accompany me to the Prince de Nassau's.

When we arrived there, we found all the house asleep. Master and valets were all plunged in the deepest slumber. We had a hard job waking up the porter, getting him to open the door to us and to reach the prince's room. Our sudden entrance woke him up with a start.

He had lost all count of what had happened on the preceding evening. The memory of it had gone from his brain together with fumes of the champagne he had imbibed.

"What brings you here so early in the morning, gentlemen?" he asked.

"You ought to know," I replied, "since it was you who desired it."

"Parbleu!" he replied. "The deuce if I know a word about it!"

So I was obliged to remind him briefly of his insolent remark towards me.

"You're right," he said. "I behaved like a fool. The wine got to my head. But one mustn't think any more about it, and, since you've brought Vicomte de Noailles with you, I tell you in his presence that I am your servant, your friend, and that I never had any intention of offending you in the least."

"That's very good!" I said, "but it's too late. I should have liked by all means to have received this reparation from you yesterday. But the twenty guests who dined with us are unable to witness it, and it is not sufficient for me."

"Very good," he replied. "You're right again. So we'll fight. But at least I beg you not to let any resentment enter into the fight, and let it be nothing but a sacrifice we make to prejudice and the point of honour."

I shook his hand in a friendly manner and he got up.

He offered me breakfast, but as I told him I would not breakfast till after the fight, he replied rather peevishly:

"Your reply takes rather a good deal for granted. We'll see which of us will breakfast after this affair."

As soon as he was dressed, we went out. I asked him where he wished to go to.

"Ah!" he replied. "I've got a place not far from here that's very convenient for this kind of exercise."

I retorted that he was quite accustomed to the job.

Stopping for a moment, I pointed out to him that I had a second, whereas he was unaccompanied, which was against the rule.

"Good!" he said. "Noailles is our friend and a man of honour. I choose him for my second as well. He's well worth two."

We continued our walk. Arrived in a little alley between two garden walls, we briskly slipped off our coats and stood in our shirts and on guard. Our swords had hardly crossed, when, noticing a large pink ribbon on the hilt of my sword, he exclaimed:

"That must be a new favour from some fine girl. I'm afraid it will bring you luck."

" We'll see presently," I replied.

We then attacked each other vigorously.

The prince fought like no one else. He followed none of the rules of fencing. As he was peculiarly nervous and nimble, at times he rushed at his foe with the swiftness of a deer, at others he sprang back with the same speed, so that it was equally difficult to parry his rapid thrusts as to reach him in his quick retreat.

This trick, which surprised me immensely, had proved successful in almost all the affairs occasioned by his quick temper. In spite of my attention and self-possession, he pierced my shirt several times, happily without touching me. On my part, I waited in vain to reach him.

Nevertheless, after a few seconds my sword tipped his hand and his blood flowed. I asked him if he was satisfied and willing to stop.

" Satisfied! " he exclaimed. " I was a short while ago, but no longer now. Let's go on! "

The fight began again. His sword was directed too impetuously and missed my body several times. At last my sword pierced his arm and broke just as I was going to parry a thrust he was returning.

" We must send for another sword," I said to him.

" You're both off your heads! " Vicomte de Noailles cried out. " For an ill-considered remark, that wasn't even an insult, two wounds and a broken sword are quite enough! I tell you now that either of you who won't stop fighting will have to deal with me."

This sally made us laugh.

" Parbleu! " said Nassau. " He's right. And I realise it all the more because my hand begins to lose its grip of the sword."

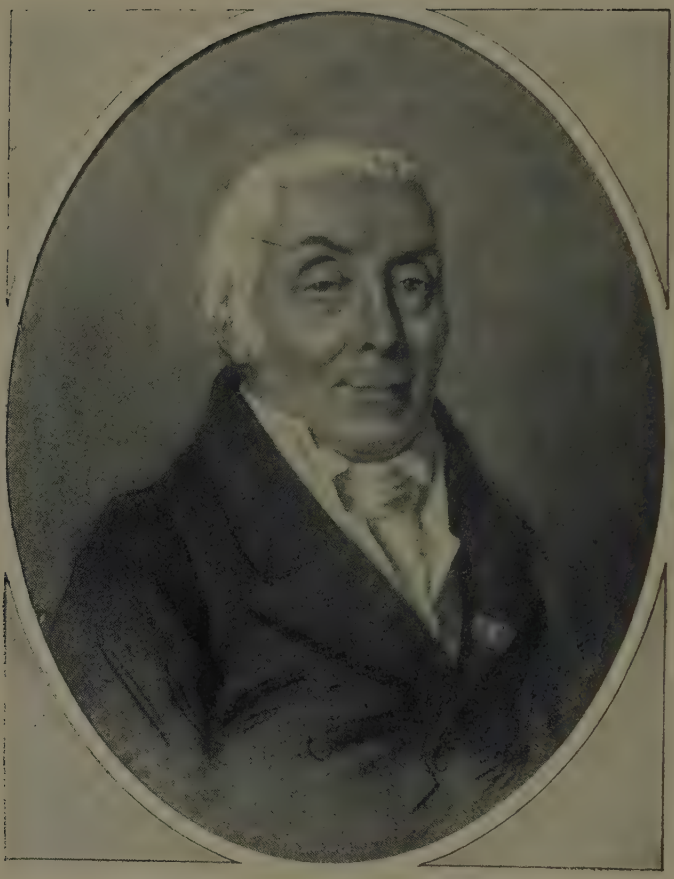
"Well!" I said. "Shall we embrace each other and finish it?"

"I consent," he replied, "on condition we swear on our honour we will never fight each other again whatever happens, and that we shall be brothers-in-arms for the rest of our life."

We embraced each other and that was the end.

I would not have entered into the details of that affair if it had not led to rather strange happenings later on. When Nassau was in Poland and I was in Russia, remembering the friendship we had sworn, I obtained for him from the Empress, whom he had never seen and who was ill-informed against him, the gift of some land in the Crimea and the permission to carry the produce of his Polish estates under the Russian flag in the Black Sea. For this he gratefully offered to serve the Empress against the Turks. Raised by her to the command of her fleets, he burnt that of the Turks in the Dnieper and beat the squadrons of the King of Sweden in the North. Thus we see how great events are often produced by little causes. Two days after our encounter, Prince de Nassau came to the Queen's ball with his arm in a sling. The story of our adventure spread, and as the times were a constant mixture of gallantry, chivalry and philosophy, the little affair brought me much honour on the part of men who boasted of their fight against prejudices, while the ladies made a feast around me.

We spent the winter in games, balls and pleasures. Who dreamt of horrible evils in the bosom of peace and prosperity? Who feared the overflowing of passion and crime when every word, writing and action had no other aim but the extirpation of vice, the propagation of virtue and the relief of the people?



COMTE LOUIS-PHILIPPE DE SÉGUR
IN LATER LIFE
By Boilly

To face p. 49

A young, virtuous and beneficent King, having no other thought than that of procuring his people's welfare and desiring no other authority than that of justice, gave by his example a new life to all these generous ideas. He had appointed ministers, Turgot and Malesherbes, two men whom public opinion proclaimed the most instructed, disinterested and virtuous. They encouraged all the ideas of tolerance and wise freedom. Everywhere the unjust persecution of the Protestants ceased. The fiscal liability of corporations was suppressed, tenants' forced labour was abolished and the traces of servitude were disappearing. With such ministers, a gentle, gradual reform would have warded off a revolution. But such a way of thinking can rarely escape the attack of the powerful classes who thrive on abuse. Almost always more powerful than the Crown, the Court took alarm at the ministers' proposals and attacked them with all the weapons whereby self-interest and intrigue know how to furnish the passions.

The King was good but weak. He shared the thoughts and sentiments of Turgot but had not the strength to uphold him. He dismissed him with lamentations. Malesherbes insisted on sharing the fate of so worthy a colleague and handed in his resignation. Nevertheless the ministers who took their place were all men of worth.

The choice of M. Necker as Finance Minister was a very great and remarkable innovation. It was the first time since the reign of Henry IV that a Protestant had a place in the councils of the King.

The darkest envy could not deny M. Necker's very noble character, lofty soul, extreme love of the public welfare, pure intentions, broad mind and brilliant eloquence. But on the other hand he resembled

the King in his being stronger in principles than in actions.

Both judged men as they ought to be and not as they are, and therefore they were too easily persuaded that it sufficed to will the good in order to do it, and to merit the people's love in order to obtain it.

Though still very young, I was admitted to close relationship with M. Necker and his wife, and I can affirm that it was impossible to listen to him without being affected by his sentiments and constrained to respect for his character. The house breathed an atmosphere of simplicity and virtue altogether foreign to the environment of a brilliant Court and corrupt capital.

I was fated several times to have a very close view of the principal personages and what was going on behind the scenes. Instead of dissipating my illusions, it merely added to them. Indeed, it was impossible to spend the evenings at d'Alembert's house, at the La Rochefoucaulds', with the friends of Turgot, to assist at the Abbé Raynal's luncheons, to frequent the society and family of M. de Malesherbes and finally to approach the kindliest of queens and the most virtuous of kings, without believing we were entering a sort of golden age. Soon we witnessed the arrival in Paris of the American deputies, Sileas Deane and Arthur Lee. Shortly after, they were joined by the celebrated American, Benjamin Franklin. Words fail to describe with what eagerness and favour these envoys of a people in rebellion against its monarch were received in France in the bosom of an ancient monarchy.

Nothing was more surprising than the contrast between the luxury of our capital, the elegance of our fashions, the magnificence of Versailles, all the living traces of the monarchical pride of Louis XIV, the polished

but proud haughtiness of our grand persons . . . and the Americans' almost rustic dress, simple but proud bearing, free and candid language, unadorned, powderless hair and their general antique appearance, which seemed to transport of a sudden within our walls, in the midst of the flabby, servile civilisation of the eighteenth century, some of the wise contemporaries of Plato or the republicans of Cato and Fabius.

Young French officers eager for war flocked to visit the American commissioners, questioning them on the state of their affairs, the forces at the disposal of Congress, their means of defence, and on the various scraps of news which were incessantly arriving from America, where they saw liberty fighting so bravely against British tyranny.

Our admiration was increased by the good faith and simplicity with which these envoys told us of the frequent defeats sustained by their inexperienced forces, for at that time the number and tactics of the English gave them several passing triumphs over the brave American planters, who were novices in warfare. Sileas Deane and Arthur Lee did not conceal from us that the help of some trained officers would be as agreeable to them as it would be useful. The American troops already numbered in its ranks several European volunteers attracted by the love of glory and independence. Among them were two Poles whose names have been preserved by history, Pulawski and Kosciusko, who later on was able to break his country's shackles for a while. The three first Frenchmen of rank to offer the help of their swords to the Americans were the Marquis de La Fayette, Vicomte de Noailles and myself. We had already been friends a long time. La Fayette and de Noailles had both married daughters of the Duc de Noailles, then known as

the Duc d'Ayen. Their mother, the Duchesse d'Ayen, was a child of the first marriage of M. d'Aguesseau, counsellor of State and son of Chancellor Aguesseau. His second marriage had given him twenty years later several children, one of whom was M. d'Aguesseau, now peer of France. A daughter married M. de Sarron, first president of the Paris Parliament. I married the other daughter in the spring of 1777, so that I became the uncle of my two friends.

We all three swore secrecy concerning our arrangements with the American commissioners in order that we might have time to fathom the dispositions of our Court and to get together the necessary means for the execution of our projects. Unfortunately there was no conformity between our hopes, desires and opinions and our fortunes. Vicomte de Noailles and I depended on our parents, and had no more than the allowance they gave us. La Fayette, on the other hand, though younger and less advanced in rank than ourselves, was at the age of nineteen master of his property and person and the owner of an income of one hundred thousand pounds.

Our eagerness was too great to be discreet for long. We confided our plan to some young men we hoped to get to join our enterprise. The Court got to hear of it and the ministry ordered us to abandon it, fearing that the departure of volunteers of rank for America, which would be considered impossible without its authorisation, might open the eyes of the English to the designs it still wished to conceal from them.

Our parents, who had known nothing till then, grew alarmed and reproached us for our adventurous levity. I was struck by the surprise shown by the family of La Fayette. It pleased me all the more because it showed

PLACE LOUIS XV

Engraved by Le Charpentier et de Sève

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how badly his grandparents had known and judged his character till then.

At all times and especially in youth, La Fayette had a cold and grave bearing, which gave a wrong impression of embarrassment and shyness. His cold exterior and reticence were in strange contrast with the peevishness, levity and brilliant loquacity of the people of his age. But behind this apparently cold mask was a very active mind, strong character and brilliant spirit. I have had more occasion than most men to appreciate him, for the previous winter, while in love with a very beautiful lady, he had wrongly taken me for a rival and in a fit of jealousy had passed almost a whole night in my house trying to persuade me to fight a duel for the heart of the beauty I hadn't the least intention of claiming.

Some days after our reconciliation I could not help laughing when I heard the Maréchal de Noailles and some others beg me to use my influence over him to rouse him from his coldness and indolence, and to communicate a little fire to his character. Judge of their astonishment when they were suddenly informed that this wise young man of nineteen, with his cold, indifferent air, was carried away by the passion for glory and danger and wanted to cross the Atlantic to fight for the cause of American freedom.

The prohibition to set out on this great adventure naturally affected us in different ways. Vicomte de Noailles and myself were bewildered, as it deprived us of all freedom and means of action. It irritated La Fayette, who decided to go his own way, being assured of all the necessary means for the success of his design.

Nevertheless he made a pretence of obeying at first. Two months later he rushed all of a sudden

into my room, closed the door tightly, and sat down near my bed.

"I'm off to America," he said. "Nobody knows about it. But I love you too much to go away without telling you my secret."

"What have you done to make sure of your sailing?" I asked.

He told me that he had made a journey abroad on some plausible pretext and had bought a vessel, which was to wait for him in a Spanish port. He had fitted it out, got a good crew and filled it not only with arms and ammunition but also with a good number of officers who had agreed to share his lot.

Among the officers was M. de Ternan, a brave, well-trained soldier, and M. de Valfort, who was distinguished by his long experience, stern uprightness and deep studies. My father afterwards entrusted him with the École Militaire, so that he became the chief instructor of Napoleon Bonaparte.

These two officers had been recommended to La Fayette by the Maréchal de Broglie, to whom he had confided his project.

I did not need many words to tell my friend how greatly I regretted not being able to accompany him. He felt it as much as I did. But we both hoped that war between England and France would soon break out and that nothing would then prevent us from joining each other.

After confiding his secret to the Vicomte de Noailles, La Fayette left Paris at once. His departure caused much affliction to his family, who could hardly bear to see him run so many dangers and, furthermore, sacrifice a great part of his fortune for the sake of a country so far away.

One woman only, though the most afflicted of all, loved him too well not to share his sentiments and approve his generous resolve.

Informed immediately of his disobedience, the Court gave orders for his arrest, which were carried out. So after all these sacrifices my unfortunate friend was deprived of his liberty at the very moment he was setting out to defend that of another hemisphere.

Happily he managed to deceive his warders and escaped a few days later. He crossed the Pyrenees and found his vessel on the Spanish coast together with his comrades in arms, who had almost given up hope of seeing him again. He set sail, arrived without mishap in America and was received in a manner befitting his noble and generous audacity.

CHAPTER V

Military Reforms

I LEFT the capital during the winter in order to taste the new pleasure of knowing and commanding the regiment of dragoons of which I was second in command.

The sight of our arms and the military exercises gave me a picture of war and helped me to grasp its reality. Another and more pressing care was soon to occupy my thoughts. On April 30, 1777, I married Mlle d'Aguesseau, and my ideas of glory were easily calmed by the aid of sweeter and no less lively impressions.

In spite of its great charm, my marriage did not cause me to forget my military duties. At the end of May I went to Douai, where the Orleans regiment was garrisoned.

During the youth of Louis XV the troops were not all dressed alike. Even later we saw maréchals, like the Maréchal de Contades, for instance, in town dress, wearing a wig. The strict obligation of wearing the uniform was established since then. Nevertheless we have still seen the officers of the Gardes Françaises mount the guard at Versailles in a black coat and neckpiece.

It was hard for discipline to be strict and instruction to be profound. The officers were taken from among the

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN AT THE CONSECRATION OF LOUIS XVI

AT RHEIMS JUNE 11, 1775

By Girault and Bouquet

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country gentlemen, who were proud, pretty troublesome and generally ill-educated.

The higher posts were reserved almost without exception for the sons of the *grands seigneurs*, and the Court nobles who were called men of quality. They were made colonels in infancy. Though one of the least favoured, my father was colonel of the Soissonnais regiment at nineteen. The Duc de Fronsac was appointed colonel of the Septomanie regiment at the age of seven. His major was only five years older. However, it should be said that the posts of lieutenant-colonel and major were generally given to captains who had shown particular intelligence. Properly speaking, there was no general administration in the corps. Each captain was charged with that of the company he recruited, equipped and governed according to his intelligence. The reverses of the Seven Years War opened our eyes rather late, and the government felt the necessity of adopting the rules of administration and tactics which had enabled Frederick the Great to triumph over the three greatest Powers of Europe. The orders of M. de Choiseul caused most of the old abuses to disappear. Our manœuvres became regular. A broader instruction was demanded of the officers, and we were subjected to the strictest discipline and subordination. A wise administration did away with the disorder, establishing a useful economy in equipment, recruitment, outfitting and repairs, and a perfect uniformity in dress. Such was the new order of things when I entered the service.

The favour granted to colonels whose regiments were the best trained and disciplined, and the advancement obtained by officers who distinguished themselves in the theoretical schools and exercises, provoked a general emulation throughout the whole of France.

All the colonels tried to outdo one another in the good appearance of their troops, and in the regularity and smartness of the manœuvres.

Self-conceit exaggerates everything. Some leaders, whom we called *Faiseurs*, tortured their soldiers with meticulous details, and the officers with a severity more stern than just. On the whole, the only lessons taken from the school of Frederick were the least essential and the easiest to grasp. They had learnt the little secrets that train and are able to move a small body of troops, but they had failed to grasp the great principles that give a great ensemble and sure direction to the movements of an army.

Respected for his virtues and well-balanced rigour, the Comte du Muy confined himself to the strict maintenance of the order he had established. His successor, Comte de St. Germain, was an enemy of abuses, luxury and the caprices of favour. He attacked the Court and suppressed the privileged bodies, which were a weight on the Treasury, rarely useful in war, but cherished by the nobility on account of the advantages they derived from them.

Wishing to establish a German discipline in our camps, which was incompatible with our manners, he subjected the French soldier to the humiliating punishment of being beaten with the flat of the sword. The order was obeyed incompletely and with repugnance. I even remember seeing the grenadiers of a regiment of four battalions at Lille shed tears of rage at the foot of their colours, while the Duc de La Vauguyon, their colonel, mingled his tears with theirs.

A great ferment was moving everything. Discussions arose on all sides concerning philosophy, religion, power, liberty, and tactics. Even music caused a sort of war to

break out between the French and Italian schools, and for a while Paris was divided into two hostile camps, that of the Gluckists and that of the Piccinists.

When M. de St. Germain's order to punish French soldiers with the flat of the sword appeared, the Court, town and army hotly discussed the innovation. Some praised it, others condemned it angrily. Bourgeois, military, clergy, women even, all held forth, and waged verbal warfare on the subject.

All who were in love with German discipline declared that the flat of the sword would soon make our army the equal of Frederick's. Others saw in it nothing but a humiliating degradation that was incompatible with French honour. A third party expressed surprise and reasoned thus: " The rod is humiliating, but the sword is the weapon of honour, and that kind of military punishment is not dishonouring. It should be examined whether it is not preferable to prison and the discipline room, which are injurious to the health, and corrupt the morals." Furthermore, grave discussions went on to discover how far the punishment acted on the senses of the soldier in order to force him by pain to forsake his vices, laziness or insubordination.

One morning my room was entered by a young man of one of the first families of the Court. I had been on friendly terms with him since childhood. Hating study, he had long thought of nothing else but pleasure, gambling and women. Lately, however, military zeal had got hold of him. He dreamt of nothing but arms, horses, schools of theory, exercises and German discipline.

He had a very serious look when he entered my room, and begged me to send my valet away. When we were alone I said to him:

"What means this early visit, my dear vicomte, and this grave entry? Is it another question of honour or love?"

"By no means!" he replied. "But it's something very important, which I've made up my mind to do. It may seem very strange to you, but it's necessary to me in order that I may be thoroughly enlightened on the great discussion that concerns us all. One can only judge well what one has personally experienced. You must realise that I could only confide my plan to my best friend, and that he alone can help me to carry it out. In a word, this is what I want. I want to know positively what impression the flat of a sword is likely to make on a strong, courageous, well-built man, and how far his stubbornness can bear the punishment without giving way. So please take your sword and beat me with it till I say 'enough'!"

Bursting into laughter I did my best to dissuade him from the idea, but he insisted and begged me so earnestly that at last I consented.

I resolved, in order to punish him for his whims, to let go *bon jeu, bon argent*. So I set about the job. To my great astonishment he uttered not a word, but meditated coldly on the impression made by each blow and tried to appear emotionless. It was not until after he had let me administer about twenty blows that he said to me:

"Friend, enough. I'm satisfied. I understand now that this is a good remedy for a great number of defects."

I thought everything was over, but just as I was about to ring for my valet, the vicomte suddenly stopped me, saying: "One moment, please, it isn't finished yet. It is right that you should test it also."

A LADY IN WAITING

By Moreau

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I assured him that I had no desire whatever to do so, and that it would make no difference to my opinion, which was utterly opposed to so un-French an innovation.

" Very good," he replied. " But if it is not for you that I ask, it is for myself. I know you. Though you are a perfect friend, you are very gay and fond of jesting and perhaps you might make a very nice story at my expense for your ladies."

" But isn't my word enough? " I asked.

" Yes," he replied. " On any other matter of importance. But even though I might only fear a little indiscretion, it is too much. So please set me at my ease on the subject by taking your turn of what you gave to me so willingly. Besides, it will be to your gain and you will be glad to have judged of this new method for yourself."

Overcome by his insistence, I let him take the fatal weapon. But after the first blow he gave me, I was far from imitating his obstinacy and hastened to exclaim that it was enough and that I considered myself sufficiently enlightened on that serious question.

Thus ended that strange scene. We embraced each other on parting, and however much I may have desired to tell the story, I kept the secret as long as he desired.

Summer passed in frequent exercises, perpetual discussions on the new systems of tactics, little wars and pretended battles, and above all in troubled and ardent desires for a rupture with England.

CHAPTER VI

The Influence of England

THE natural result of our declaring ourselves, through sheer war-like temper, the partisans and champions of freedom was that we ended by warmly embracing the cause in good faith.

After reading all that was written on the new doctrines, we became the ardent disciples of those who professed them, and the adversaries of the preachers of the Old Times, whose prejudices, pedantry and customs seemed ridiculous to us.

We never grew tired of laughing at them with Voltaire and groaning at them with Rousseau. The academic speeches of Thomas, d'Alembert and their like fired our imagination. Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois* aroused a deep admiration in us, and while that book made us think we had found the laws and rights of a long-lost people, his *Lettres Persanes* made us almost ashamed of the manners of our time through his witty and satirical portrait of them.

Our impatience was goaded all the more by the comparison of our actual situation with that of the English. Montesquieu had opened our eyes to the advantages of British institutions. Communications between the two peoples had become more frequent. The brilliant but frivolous life of our nobility at Court and in town was no

longer able to satisfy our self-conceit, when we compared it with the dignity, independence and useful life of a peer of England or a member of the House of Commons, and with the proud and peaceful liberty of all the citizens of Great Britain.

I have always been surprised that our Government and statesmen, instead of condemning as frivolous, stupid and un-French the sudden mania for English fashions in France, failed to perceive that it covered desire to imitate in other things, and contained the germs of a great revolution in people's minds. They did not dream that in doing away with the narrow walks, symmetrical squares, bowl-shaped trees and uniform hedges of our parks in order to transform them into English gardens, we were expressing our desire to get back to nature and reason on other points as well.

They did not realise that the frock coats which replaced the ample and imposing dress of the old Court foretold a general inclination towards equality, and that since we were unable to shine in assemblies like the English lords and deputies, we wanted at least to distinguish ourselves like them by the magnificence of our circuses, the luxuriousness of our parks, and the speed of our racers.

Nevertheless, there was nothing less easy to perceive. It was enough to listen to the talk of those who first brought us those fashions: Comte de Lauraguais, the Duc de Lauzun, Duc de Chartres, Marquis de Conflans, and many others, to realise that they had no intention of confining themselves to mere superficial imitations.

All the young people at the Court, even the Prince, were carried away by this torrent. The Queen was greatly bored by etiquette and showed a lively interest in English

gardens and horse-racing. She honoured the races with her presence, and thus encouraged the folly of bettors who lost their fortunes there.

Some old gentlemen condemned the mania, but only because it was new. Good King Louis XVI alone strongly disapproved of it, not as a sign of dangerous innovations, but as a ridiculous and scandalous luxury, and as a humiliating preference for the customs of another country against our own.

Whereas enormous wagers were made at these races, the King would not lay more than an écu, when pressed to wager. The lesson was useless. Opinion was already stronger than authority and example. Unfortunately the violence of the waves and the weakness of the pilot were only too obvious in all respects.

Here is an anecdote to prove this. Comte de Lauraguais was famous for his passion for English manners and institutions, besides having a reputation for brilliant adventures, rather cynical turn of mind, and a love of luxury which devoured all his fortune. His boldness of speech and writings drew upon him a fairly large number of *lettres de cachet*, which he jokingly referred to as his " correspondence with the King."

I remember seeing him walking tranquilly about at one of the races at which all the Court attended, though I knew he had been exiled from Paris by a *lettre de cachet*. I attempted to get him to realise the danger of his imprudence, but he only laughed. His escapade could not have been unknown, and yet it remained unpunished.

Though extremely fond of the whirl and pleasures of the world, he studied the sciences, and made discoveries in chemistry which secured his admission to the Academy of Science. We owe to him the art of

THE TRIP TO MARLEY

By Moreau

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perfecting porcelain. He experimented with ether, and made discoveries concerning the dissolving of diamonds. The latter were of no good to anyone, and led to his ruin. Passionate and original in all his tastes, he spent an untold sum on diamonds, part of which were bestowed on ungrateful beauties, while the rest were melted in his porcelain furnaces. He was one of the first to favour innoculation in France in spite of the pedantry of the magistrature and the superstitions of the Sorbonne.

The celebrated grammarian, Dumarsais, whose science was the glory of his country, languished in poverty, because he was suspected of being a Jansenist. By giving him a pension, M. de Lauraguais relieved him from the persecutions of the Roman Church and the injustice of the Court.

He was long looked upon as the most sumptuous and *galant* of the *grands seigneurs*. But for a longer period he appeared badly dressed, unkempt, and affected the simplicity of a Danube peasant.

I remember his coming to see me one morning in that cynical dress, though his face was beaming with pleasure.

"Where did you get this unusual gaiety from?" I asked him.

"My friend," he replied, "I'm the happiest of men. I'm utterly ruined."

"Lord!" I replied. "That's odd luck. One might as well hang oneself for it."

"You make a mistake, my dear," he replied. "When I was merely in a bad state of affairs, I was overwhelmed with business, tortured and tossed between fear and hope. Now that I'm ruined, I feel quite independent, tranquil and care-free."

M. de Lauraguais followed his fancy in all sorts of things. Our theatres owe a great revolution to him. He was the first to make us realise that it was ridiculous and unreal to allow the elegants of the Court and town to sit on either side of the stage in front of the scenery. On his advice actors gave up representing ancient characters in modern dress. Thanks to him we no longer saw Nero, Brutus, or Theseus dressed in a great shirt, with a scarf and bows on the shoulder, or Phèdre and Mérope in curly, powdered hair and hooped dresses.

During the Seven Years' War, he charged the enemy three times at the head of his regiment and displayed the coolest and most splendid fearlessness. At the end of the combat, he assembled his officers and having praised them in a fitting manner, asked them if they were satisfied with his behaviour. They answered with unanimous applause.

"I'm quite sure you are satisfied with your colonel," he said, "but I am by no means satisfied with the craft we pursue, so I'm going to leave it."

Indeed, he left the service after the campaign.

He was the first to arrange a race with English horses and jockeys at Sablons for the benefit of Parisians.

When the ideas of liberty began to spread, he became one of the most ardent partisans of the great innovations that were brewing. He already saw himself in a French parliament playing the rôle of a Walpole, Chatham or Fox. But our revolutionary tempest belied his hopes, as it did those of many another. It was not until after the Restoration that he took his seat in the House of Peers, and then his age prevented him from appearing very long.

When the Budget was published by M. Necker, a work so eagerly discussed that it was to be found in the pockets of all the clergy and on the ladies' toilet tables, M. de Lauraguais wrote some very brilliant pamphlets on Finance against the minister, and their satire brought upon him new disgrace and some extra supplements to his *correspondence with the King*.

Though he took all sorts of liberties in his writings, he was very pleasant and witty in society. Only he was less amiable when he started to dogmatise on finance or politics in the midst of a frivolous world that couldn't bear to hear anything stressed in order not to spoil the conversation. To please, it was better to hide one's knowledge and skim over everything.

Occasionally M. de Lauraguais burst into poetry, but he was not happy in that adventure.

I remember his coming to me one morning with a tragedy he had composed under the title of *Jocaste*. Asking me afterwards for my opinion, I jokingly answered that it was very much in his taste, and that there were many beauties in the piece, though I had unfortunately found nothing very clear except the lines on the Sphinx.

" That's because you must have listened very badly," he replied.

" On the contrary," I replied, " I remember them very well. Here they are:

> Oui, Phorbas à l'instant, dans le temple inspiré,
> M'a révélé ce qu'il ignore encor lui-même,
> —Ah ? qu'a-t-til dit? Parlez, ma surprise est extrême*

*Yes, Porbas has just revealed to me in the inspired temple
What he himself is ignorant of.
Ah ? What did he say ? Speak ! my surprise is extreme.

"You are a bad joker," said the Comte. "Your mind is not on a level with my talent or the age, since you don't realise that I give Europe the balance of my genius."

"Beware of the word balance," I said to him, "it's a bad omen."

Though his written sarcasms seemed to indicate a bad spirit, M. de Lauraguais had a very kind heart, and was a good friend, obliging and open-handed with all he had, and able to do without what he hadn't. Nobody knew how to risk his luck better than he, or to put up with poverty more stoically.

He once claimed deep knowledge of metaphysics, and arranged a meeting with the chevalier de Boufflers and myself in order to explain to us the obscure doctrine of *Des Erreurs et de la Verité*, a work composed by the celebrated Saint-Martin, the head of the Illuminati.

After listening to him patiently for two hours, we both told him that till that day we had thought we had found the key to several cryptic passages in the book, but since listening to his learned explanation, we no longer understood anything whatever.

Such was the peculiarity of that age, that while incredulity was the fashion, and all bonds were looked upon as chains, and philosophy treated all the old beliefs and customs as prejudices, a great part of the new young wise men lost their heads to the doctrines of the Illuminati, Swedenborg, Saint-Martin, and communication with celestial spirits, while many others gathered round Mesmer's wand, believing in the universal efficacy of magnetism, and the infallibility of the oracles of somnambulism.

Never was so great a contrast seen in opinions, tastes and manners. Inside the academies people applauded the maxims of philanthropy, the diatribes against vain-

THE TRIANON,
FROM THE ENGLISH GARDEN
(*Extract from Voyage de Laborde*, 1782)

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glory, and the pledges for everlasting peace. But as soon as they were outside, they wrangled and intrigued and spouted in order to drag the government into war. Everybody tried to eclipse his rival in luxury while talking like a republican and preaching equality. Never did the Court show so much magnificence and vanity, and so little power. The powers at Versailles were ridiculed, and court was paid to the powers of the *Encyclopédie*.

We preferred a flattering word from d'Alembert, or Diderot, to the greatest favour of a prince. Gallantry, ambition, philosophy, all were mixed up and confused. Prelates left their dioceses in order to canvass ministerial posts. Priests wrote verses and lewd stories.

The Court applauded the republican maxims of "Brutus"; monarchs were ready to espouse the cause of a people in revolt against its king (America); in a word they talked of independence in the military camps, of democracy among the nobles, of philosophy in the ballrooms, and of morals in the ladies' boudoirs.

What is most to be regretted of that by-gone age is the charming tolerance and gentleness which survived in the midst of a great conflict of opinions, systems, tastes and aspirations.

I shall never forget the delightful gatherings which brought together the most distinguished financiers, magistrates, courtiers, poets and philosophers at the house of the Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier. Among those taking a brilliant part were Boufflers, Champfort, La Harpe, Marmontel, Panchaud, Raynal, Abbé de Périgord, later Prince de Talleyrand, my brother, the Prince de Ligne, the new chevalier de Grammont of all countries, a favourite with all the kings, and the friend of all the philosophers, and the Duc de Lauzun,

who searched everywhere for glory and found nothing but illusions.

At other gathering places one heard with pleasure mingled with veneration the simple, industrious, eloquent and learned Abbé Barthélemy ; Malesherbes, one of the most popular of famous men, the most straightforward of ministers, the most upright of magistrates, the least flattering to courtiers. Immortal Malesherbes thought like a philosopher, acted like a wise man and charmed everybody with the richness of his memory and the number and variety of his anecdotes, at the same time edifying them with the morality of his discourses and the universality of his knowledge. One heard also the Duc de Nivarnais, who was distinguished for his delicate taste and urbane manner as well as for his fine and pleasant wit. He managed to combine the nobility of the old Court with the intellectual spirit of the new, uniting in himself the image and spirit of two different ages.

CHAPTER VII

War Breaks Out

ON ALL sides public opinion urged the Government to take up the cause of republican liberty. Moved more and more by the torrent, ministers were still afraid of declaring a rupture with England and undertaking a new war. Moreover, they were restrained by the strict uprightness of Louis XVI.

That monarch looked upon neutrality as a duty, because there was no aggression on the part of the English to justify him in taking a hostile step against the British Crown. It was not the fear of expense and the chances of war that concerned him. It was his conscience that made him treat as perfidy any violation of the treaties and state of peace for no other motive than that of lowering a rival power.

Hence, jolted between the will of its Prince and the desire of the public, the Government was obliged, through weakness, to do the worst thing in politics. It encouraged French traffic in arms and ammunitions with the Americans, and gave a favourable though mysterious reception to the American envoys. Its discourses flattered the hopes and impatience of war-thirsty youth. It permitted the circulation of the writings of the partisans of American freedom, at the

same time charging our ambassador in London to appease the alarm of the English Government, and to give the latter frequent assurances of our desire to maintain peace by the observation of the strictest neutrality.

Nevertheless the storm increased. After a succession of defeats, Fortune began to favour the Americans. The tactics and discipline of the English no longer bewildered the ill-trained courage of the new republicans. Congress passed wise laws in the midst of the tumult of arms.

At last news came of the defeat of the army of General Burgoyne, which was surrounded by the rebels, deprived of food and communications, and obliged, through the impossibility of fighting or fleeing, to lay down its arms at the feet of those poor, but proud agriculturists, whose simplicity, lack of discipline and ignorance of military operations it had hitherto despised.

That victory weighed the political scales. The news of the triumph flashed across Europe. At all times, fortune brings friends, and America soon found allies.

The news of this success doubled our ardour and impatience. Urged on by us and reassured by fortune, the Government made less secret of their intentions, and persuaded the King that the interests of France necessitated the taking up of relations with the Americans without breaking with England. Consequently the ministers received the American commissioners more openly, and after negotiations, signed a preliminary treaty of commerce and friendship in December, 1777. The result was something they had not foreseen, though it was obliged to happen. The English Government addressed its reproaches to us, considering this new link, with its insurgent provinces, as an open rupture.

Our ambassador tried in vain to assert that we were actuated by our commercial interests, and to protest our love for peace. The English were determined on war. At the same time, believing themselves authorised by our conduct, which they looked upon as an aggression, to ignore and infringe the rights of nations, they sent secret orders to their admirals. Thus we were soon to learn that without any declaration of war on their part or any act of hostility on ours, they had taken hold of several of our trading vessels at sea and attacked our possessions in India.

The definite treaty with America was soon concluded.

Our ambassador left London. Everybody ran to the colours. Our ardent young people had all they desired and war soon broke out in both hemispheres.

The English were the first to break the peace openly. One of their warships, the *Arethusa*, attacked a French frigate, *La Belle-Poule*. M. de la Clocheterie, the commander, brilliantly upheld the honour of our flag. The fight was long and bloody. The *Arethusa* was defeated and took flight, while the commander of the French frigate brought it back to port riddled with bullets and with half the crew lost under fire. He was received in triumph by the population, who were delighted with this first brilliant success, and looked upon it as a sure sign of good fortune and glory. Then Louis XVI consented to put into action all the forces his ministers had armed.

Comte d'Estaing, in command of a French squadron, sailed for the coast of America.

CHAPTER VIII

The Triumph of Voltaire

WHILE these great events kept the Governments and newsmongers busy, the curiosity of Parisians was engaged upon a new sight.

For many years Voltaire had lived in exile. His works were read with delight by all Frenchmen, though scarcely any of them had seen him. His contemporaries were to him, if one may say so, a sort of posterity. Admiration for his genius was, for many, a sort of cult and worship. Apart from a few persons who had been admitted to his sanctum at Ferney, he was like an invisible power to the rest of his fellow citizens.

Perhaps no other mortal has ever wrought such great changes in the opinions and manners of his age.

Without rank, birth, or authority, he found his strength in the clearness of his reasoning, the varied eloquence of his style and the engaging charm of his gracefulness. To bring down the old and fearsome giants against which he fought, he made less use of the club than of the light weapon of ridicule and irony.

Taking advantage of some excusable indiscretions and improper writings, the clergy, certain stern parliamentarians and a small number of old courtiers with an affection for the old abuses of power, had succeeded in making

certain insinuations which were enough to oblige him to seek for peace and safety in exile.

His return, like his disgrace, was a proof of the weakness of authority. Philosophic opinion was so strong, and intimidated authority so greatly, that he was allowed to return to his country without official permission. The Court refused to receive him, but the whole town seemed to rise to meet him. He had been refused a small grace and was allowed to enjoy a triumph.

Carried away by the whirlwind, the Queen made several vain attempts to get the King's permission to receive the celebrated man. Louis XVI's scruples of conscience forbade him to acknowledge a writer whose bold blows had not been confined to abuses but had assailed deeply venerated doctrines. Hence the Presence of the Throne remained closed to one whom the nation worshipped with transports of admiration.

The great man's rivals were bewildered. The clergy was indignant, but kept silent. The Parliaments also kept silence, and the power of the philosophers was increased by the presence and triumph of their chief.

One needs to have lived at the time and seen the public joy, the impatient curiosity and eagerness of an admiring crowd in order to realise that famous old man, who had inherited the brilliance of one age and made the glory of another.

It was the apotheosis of a god. He said to the people:

"Do you want to make me die of pleasure?"

In point of fact, the enjoyment of so many touching homages was beyond his strength. It ruined him. The altar erected to him became his tomb.

Anxious to see the famous man at close quarters, I was lucky in being able to see him without struggling

through a crowd two or three times at my parents' house. They had known him pretty well as a young man.

My mother was suffering from a cruel, devouring illness at the time. She had already been two years in its grip, and was bed-ridden. Her weakness was very great, for, one month after the time I refer to, she breathed her last.

She had always been looked upon as one of the most distinguished women of Paris on account of her fine mind, true taste, right thinking and elegant speech and manners. She had been remarkable in youth for her pleasant looks, and was considered a model of good tone and the most attractive urbanity.

Voltaire had not forgotten her. He begged to see her, and although she was hardly able to see or hear him, she received him.

We often get a wrong idea of people, things or places we have never seen, but have admired in our imagination. The reality is often quite different. I had experienced this a good number of times, but when I saw Voltaire, he was just as I had pictured him.

His thinness told me of his long labours. His antique and peculiar costume reminded me that he was the last representative of the age of Louis XIV, as well as its historian and the immortal painter of Henry IV. His piercing eye sparkled with genius and malice. One could see in it the tragic poet, the author of *Œdipe* and *Mahomet*, the profound philosopher, the roguish story-teller and the satirical observer of mankind. His lean, bent body was nothing but a light, almost transparent frame, through which his soul and genius seemed to appear.

I was overcome with pleasure and admiration. I was all ears and eyes as I approached him, as though I expected

MARMONTEL
By Boilly

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an oracle to fall from his mouth at any moment. It was, however, neither the time nor the place to pronounce one. He was at the bedside of a dying woman, whose aspect could only fill him with sad thoughts. She seemed to be no longer sensible of admiration or consolation. Nevertheless, she made a great effort to overcome the weakness of nature. Her eyes regained somewhat of their lustre and her voice became stronger.

Seeking to turn her mind from the present by remembrance of the past, Voltaire said little to her about her condition. He merely told her that he had often been in a similar state of suffering, but had regained his health by the same courage as she displayed.

"Doctors work very few miracles," he said. "But nature works a lot of wonders, especially for those to whom she has given the principle of life which still shines in your eyes."

He then reminded her of a number of anecdotes of the world they had once frequented together. He did so with a liveliness of spirit, freshness of memory, variety of manner and abundance of witticisms that would have made us forget his age if his features and voice had not reminded us that he was over eighty years old.

He was unable to restore the patient to health, but he livened her up. For a while she seemed no longer to feel her weakness and sufferings. She kept up the conversation pretty brightly, and this gave me a weak and last ray of hope.

A few days later, Voltaire came to see her again. As she felt a little stronger that day, she took a more active part in the conversation, and gently reproached the old philosopher for his obstinacy in ridiculing the Church and its members, even religion itself, under the pretext

of combating old errors, absurd superstitions and dangerous fanatics.

"Be generous and moderate after the victory," she said to him. "What have you to fear at present from such adversaries? The fanatics are overthrown. They're no longer harmful. Their reign is over."

"You are in error," Voltaire replied with some heat. "They are a fire that's covered but not extinguished. Those fanatics and humbugs are rabid dogs. They've been muzzled, but they keep their teeth. They can't bite now, it's true, but if they don't have their teeth drawn, you will see that they will know how to bite as soon as they get the chance."

The fire of anger shone in his eyes, and the passion that stirred him up caused him to lose that sense of proportion in his expressions, of which he was usually a perfect model.

The desire to see this famous man had brought to my mother's house some fifty or sixty persons who crowded the drawing-room and stood around the bed, straining their necks and tip-toeing in order to catch every word that fell from the lips of Voltaire, so anxious were they to see and hear him in the smallest details.

I realised thereby to what extent preconceived ideas and enthusiasm, even in the most enlightened class, can resemble superstition and border on the ridiculous. Answering Voltaire's questions regarding her health, my mother said that her greatest suffering was the wasting of her stomach and the difficulty of finding a food to suit it.

Voltaire expressed his sympathy, and told her that he had suffered in the same way for over a year and had been told he was incurable, but a very simple means had

cured him. It consisted of taking no food but the yolks of eggs beaten up with potato, flour and water.

Naturally there could be no question of ingenious sayings and flashes of wit in such a conversation, but he had hardly uttered the words " yolks of eggs " and " potato flour " when one of those standing near me fixed his burning eye upon me and squeezing my arm, exclaimed in an outburst of admiration:

" What a man! what a man! not a word without a flash of wit! "

Till then I had remained modestly in the last row of those who were contemplating Voltaire. But at the end of his second visit I was presented to him as he left my mother's bedroom. Several of his friends, the Comte d'Argental, the Chevalier de Chastellux, the Duc de Nivernais, the Comte de Guibert, the Chevalier de Boufflers, Marmontel and d'Alembert, who no doubt all judged me too favourably, had spoken to him about me in a eulogistic way.

Of course this was due to their great kindness, since I was known only for a few slight productions, stories, fables and romances, whose success in society depends on the whim of fashion and lasts no longer.

Voltaire charmed my self-conceit by talking to me very gracefully about my passion for literature and my first attempts. He gave me some advice by way of encouragement:

" Don't forget," he said, " that you have merited the good that has been said of you, by mixing in the slightest of poems a few realities in the images, a little morality in the sentiments, a few grains of philosophy in the gay parts. But beware of your penchant for poetry. You may follow it, but not let yourself be carried away by it. I gather from what I've been told that you are

destined to more serious occupations. You did well to begin by writing verse; for it is difficult for anyone who has never loved verse, and knows neither its art nor its charm, to be able to write perfect prose. Go, young man. Take the good wishes of an old man who foretells a happy destiny for you. But remember that poetry, divine though she be, is a siren."

I thanked him for his literary blessing, reminding him that in olden times the words poet and prophet—*vates*—were synonymous.

I did not see Voltaire again till at the Théâtre Français, when *Irène* was staged. It was a day of triumph which proved by the great applause given to that middling tragedy how excessive was the enthusiasm which its author aroused in the public.

One may say that for several weeks there were two Courts in France, that of the King at Versailles and that of Voltaire in Paris. At the former, the good King, Louis XVI, led a simple, unimposing life thinking of nothing but the reform of abuses and the welfare of a people who were too easily impressed by pomp and show to appreciate the unassuming virtues. His court was like the peaceful refuge of a wise man, compared with Voltaire's house on the Quai des Théâtins, where all day long were heard the cries and acclamations of an immense, idolatrous crowd which came from all parts to pay homage to the greatest genius of Europe.

The French Academy, into which he was to be received, went out to meet him, and after that public homage, which no prince had ever received, the Prince of Letters presided over the Literary Senate of France and the assembly of all the talents, in all of which his genius had produced masterpieces.

IN A CAMP

By Chantreau

On his return to his house, which was transformed into a palace by his presence, he sat in the midst of a sort of council composed of the most celebrated and boldest philosophers, and writers of the age, while his courtiers were the most distinguished men of all classes, and the outstanding foreigners of all countries.

Guards alone were lacking to this sort of royalty. And they were really necessary in order to protect him against the eagerness of the multitude which came from all parts, besieged his doors and surrounded him as soon as he came out, scarcely leaving his horses the possibility of opening a passage.

His coronation took place at the Tuileries Palace in the hall of the Théâtre Français. It would be difficult to describe the intoxication with which the old man was received by the public. All the seats, boxes, corridors and exits were crammed with people. Never has the tribute of a nation reached such heights.

I can never forget the scene, but I cannot realise how Voltaire had the strength to stand it. As soon as he appeared, the actor Brizard placed a crown of laurels on his head. He took it off at once, but the people cried out to him to keep it on. In the midst of the greatest applause, the names of all his works were called out from all sides.

It was impossible to begin the performance of *Irène* for a long time after the curtain was raised. Everybody was too much concerned with looking at Voltaire and paying him noisy homage. In fact, everybody was too much of an actor at the time to listen to those of the theatre.

As soon as the general lassitude allowed the latter to start acting, they were interrupted by the tumultuous agitation of the spectators. " Never," said M. Grimm,

" was a piece more badly played, more applauded and less listened to."

When it was over, the bust of Voltaire was placed on the front of the stage. It was surrounded by all the actors of the tragedy in the dresses of their rôles, by the guards that had figured in the piece, and as many of the spectators as could find room on the stage. Strangest of all, the actor who came forward to place the crown on the bust of that stubborn enemy of superstition still wore the habit of a monk, that of Léonce in the tragedy.

The bust remained on the stage during the performance of the little piece, *Nanine*. Nobody listened to it and everybody applauded it as much as *Irène*. To crown his day of glory, Voltaire saw a captain of the guards of one of our princes enter his box. He came to tell him how delighted the prince was to join in the homage of France to her genius.

A few days previously Voltaire had almost succumbed to an unforeseen death, which would have deprived him of his brilliant triumph. A violent hemorrhage had thrown his life into great danger.

Not daring to fight against him any longer, the clergy had hoped to convert him. At first Voltaire gave way, and received the Abbé Gauthier, made his confession, and wrote a profession of faith which did not altogether satisfy the priests, and greatly displeased the philosophers.

Once out of danger, he forgot his fears and prudence. Falling seriously ill a few weeks later, he refused to see a priest, and in a state of apparent insensibility ended his long life after so many labours, storms, and bursts of glory.

Those who had been unable to oppose his triumph refused to give his body a place among the tombs of the Parisian people. One of his relations took the body

and conveyed it in haste to the Abbey of Scellières, where it was interred before the Curé of the place had received the prohibition to grant it burial, the order arriving three hours late. But for the devotion of that friend, the mortal remains of one of our greatest men, whose glory filled the world, would not have obtained a few feet of earth to cover them.

The same year that took Voltaire from us saw the death of Rousseau. Both these torches were extinguished about the same time, and they vanished from the earth just as their doctrines, ill-interpreted by their passionate disciples and enemies, were about to shake the very foundations of Europe.

Voltaire's death was as brilliant as his life. Rousseau's end was sad and silent. That friend of Nature shunned his fellow men whom he believed to be his enemies, and the man who had shed so much light upon the world disappeared in the shadows of the woods, in which he was pleased to await a peaceful end to a painful existence.

The death of these two chiefs of modern philosophy gave rise to a deceitful joy among their adversaries. The latter thought for a while that they had triumphed, forgetting, no doubt, that if men of genius die, their thoughts are immortal.

CHAPTER IX

The American Campaign

THERE was a prompt distraction from these events in France. Though Europe had thought our Navy utterly destroyed by the last war and incapable of immediate resurrection, a naval force of thirty-two vessels and fifteen frigates left the port of Brest under the orders of Comte d'Orvilliers. This was apart from the fleet sent to America under M. d'Estaing. These three divisions were commanded by Admirals de Guichen, Duchafaut and Lamotte-Picquet. The latter had on board the Duc de Chartres, first prince of the blood, who was known later as Philippe-Egalité.

Admiral Keppel advanced to meet the French at the head of an army of equal strength. He was aware of their bravery, but was surprised at the perfection of our fighting order, the cleverness of our manœuvres, and the rapid progress of our skill.

The battle was bright and bloody. Many vessels suffered considerable loss in crew, masts and rigging. But as no vessel was taken on either side, the combatants separated without definite result. Being too accustomed to maritime triumphs, the English thought themselves defeated because we had not been vanquished, while the French claimed the victory because they had not received a set-back.

THE PASSAGE FROM THE TUILERIES TO THE CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES

Drawing of the XVIIIth century

To face p. 84

The Duc de Chartres put into port with the fleet, and came back to Paris rather too promptly. He was overwhelmed with praises. At the theatre he was bombarded with laurel crowns. On all sides there were songs of victory. Court and town seemed to be intoxicated.

Soon, however, came the news in detail. Enthusiasm vanished. Praises gave place to epigrams. The Comte d'Orvilliers was accused of too much cautiousness. The Duc de Chartres was accused of having failed to execute an order which would have permitted him to cut the enemy's line. He was annoyed because his command was taken away from him, and he was appointed Colonel General of the Hussars. He looked upon this change as an affront, and it was perhaps the germ of many mistakes and mishaps which occurred later on.

On the other hand England took the Admirals Keppel and Palisser to task, but the action against them had no result, like the battle which gave rise to it.

Comte d'Orvilliers and his adversary appeared once more on the high seas, but owing to the fault of the winds or the men in command, both forces seemed to avoid each other.

Meanwhile our trade suffered. Our ministers failed to take the necessary precautions, and the English made many captures. Hence there arose a noisy clamour on the part of our trading fleet against the royal marine. Our self-conceit, however, received a little satisfaction. Several of our frigates distinguished themselves in single combats and M. de Fabry, an officer of the Navy, took possession of several English convoys.

At the same time a great number of regiments were sent to our coasts. Their movements gave food to our

burning hopes, but on arriving at the ocean, we shuddered with impatience at the sight of that great barrier holding up our advance. We had thought our naval forces would open a passage for us, and their return to our ports threw us into great dejection.

It was a strange contrast at the time to watch our young people solemnly discussing the grave questions of philosophy, to observe the serious importance we attached to the least events of the war, to note the strength of our passions for everything that savoured of liberty and glory, and on the other hand to see the carelessness and frivolity of the octogenarian minister who governed the State.

While everyone was accusing or defending the conduct of the chiefs of our naval forces and generally regretting the small result of their efforts, M. de Maurepas joked about these grave matters, treating them as an inexhaustible subject for his witticisms and jests.

"Do you know what a naval combat is?" he would ask. "I'll tell you. Two squadrons come out of two opposite ports. They meet, fire a few shots, knock down a few masts, tear a few sails, kill a few men. They use plenty of powder and bullets. Then both forces retire and claim to have remained mistress of the field of battle. Both claim the victory. On either side they intone the Te Deum and . . . the sea remains none the less briny."

Happily the other ministers treated these great affairs a little more seriously.

All my attempts to get employment in some expedition were unsuccessful, and I fretted at having to remain a colonel of the dragoons while only the infantry in ships could have a chance of fighting.

Some of my friends were luckier and aroused my envy. The Duc de Lauzun set sail with the Marquis de Vaudreuil and conquered Sénégal in Africa. Arthur and Edouard Dillon, Marquis de Coigny and Vicomte de Noailles served under M. de Bouillé and M. d'Estaing. The former took possession of St. Domingo, and, later on, the island of St. Lucia.

The year 1779 revived our hopes of no longer remaining inactive spectators of the war. The king assembled numerous troops on the ocean coast. Two camps were formed, one at Vaussieux in Normandy and another at Paramé in Brittany. The former was under the command of the Maréchal de Broglie, the latter under M. de Castries. The offices of the Ministry were besieged by young people anxious to join the troops in these camps.

It was looked upon as a great misfortune to remain inactive in garrisons while an invasion of England was being prepared. Not on behalf of petitions for favours were the apartments of Versailles thronged with eager courtiers. The crowds that gathered there were all seekers after peril and glory.

I was among the unfortunate number who saw their regiments condemned to inactivity. The only remaining hope was to join the staff of the head-quarters of the armies on the coast. But such a way was very difficult, and a great deal of favour was necessary to avail oneself of it.

The War Minister was at his wits' end to satisfy all the demands that were made on him. Many of them were backed by very important persons, even by the royal family. It was impossible to please everybody. The number of jobs was soon complete with the exception of a few, which were the subject of a keen competition.

Sufficient proof of the weakness of authority against the complaints and ardour of the young war-wild courtiers is seen in the fact that although I had succeeded, with the help of the Queen, in getting appointed assistant to the Billeting Marshal at the Paramé camp, M. de Maurepas demanded my word of honour that I would say nothing about it, set out discreetly and conceal the favour till I arrived at M. de Castries' head-quarters.

I kept the secret faithfully. But on my arrival at the camp, I discovered that M. de Castries himself had not been informed of my appointment. As I was not in possession of the letters of service I had been promised, I was in a great predicament. M. de Castries relieved me. He allowed me to don the dress of aide-de-camp and to be attached to him. A few days later I received the Minister's letter and took the dress as well as the functions of an officer at head-quarters.

Our days went by in exercises, mock-battles, attack, defence, debarkation and military scouting. Our war games were real feasts. People poured in from the towns to watch us, and a number of lovely ladies came from Paris.

Our brilliant young people were very lively, but rather lacking in subordination. A single instance is proof of this. During one of our great manœuvres a certain number of places had been reserved on top of a hill for the accommodation of the ladies. Two colonels of our army sauntered up, arm in arm with a couple of ladies recently arrived from Court. They brushed their way through the crowd and took possession of some seats, which were promptly claimed by some Breton ladies. An altercation ensued.

THE SEDAN CHAIR
By Moreau

To face p. 88

Next day the report of the quarrel spread throughout the camp. It should be said that a very strange abuse had long been tolerated in all our military bodies. It was an association of young lieutenants and sub-lieutenants called *La Calotte*. It had its meetings, officers, general and a weird but strict police. It recognised no superiority or distinction of rank. It was a powerful, turbulent force that refused to obey except under arms and inflicted comical punishments such as the see-saw and blanket-tossing on all whom it considered guilty of any infraction of its rules, or capricious legislation.

In the intervals between exercises all the young soldiers came together to play the game of prison-bars, attracting a great crowd of onlookers. One day just as the game was about to begin, two officer friends of mine came to tell me that a scandalous execution was about to take place. The *Calotte* had solemnly decided that the two colonels I have just mentioned should be publicly ridiculed in order to avenge the insult offered by them to the Breton ladies.

There wasn't a minute to lose. The game was beginning and the order of the *Calotte* was about to be carried out. Having no time or chance to consult anyone, I ordered the drums to beat the general rally. The game ceased at once. Noise and disorder took the place of silence and the rule. Every man ran to the colours and in the twinkling of an eye was ready for battle.

Meanwhile I ran to M. de Castries, whom I found extremely surprised at the sudden alarm. I explained the reason to him. He approved of what I had done, and took command of the manœuvres. When the retreat was sounded, everybody believed the general

had merely wished to test the promptitude of the troops in taking up their arms and falling into rank.

Next day the wise men put their heads together. The hot-heads calmed down and strict orders were given which put an end to the arbitrary actions of the courts of the *Calotte*.

In the midst of all our exercises and amusements we had no serious thought or desire save for the time when we should be able to embark for the invasion of England's shores. Everything seemed to combine to strengthen our hopes.

Convinced of the necessity of the invasion, General La Fayette had left the colours of Washington to join those of his own country. He was appointed Major-general of the army of the Maréchal de Broglie.

Just as they were about to act, the Governments of France and Spain recalled, as though by accident, that they had long been waging war without having declared it. So their manifesto appeared that year.

On June 3, 1779, thirty-two French vessels sailed out of Brest and thirty-three Spanish ones from Cadiz.

The English admiral, Charles Hardy, in command of a squadron of thirty-eight vessels, vainly tried to oppose the union of the two fleets, which took place on June 25th. The combined forces made up a fleet of sixty-six warships and a large number of frigates under the orders of Admiral d'Orvilliers and the Spanish general, Don Gaston. At the same time our shores were littered with transport vessels, the sight of which filled us with hope and ardour.

Never did a noble goal appear so near, and never was expectation so deeply deceived. The allied fleet chased Admiral Hardy without overtaking him, and appeared at Plymouth with the intention of taking it. An English vessel of sixty-four cannon, which came out of that port, was taken by our ships.

Orders were given and the attack was about to begin, when a raging wind sprang up and dispersed our ships. Admiral Hardy, who till then had made no attempt to relieve the Plymouth road, managed to get in by favour of the tempest. When the wind dropped, our admirals tried in vain to entice Hardy into combat. Infectious illnesses spread among our fleets and discouragement fell upon their crews. Confessing themselves defeated, not by the enemy but by the elements. Admirals d'Orvilliers, Guichen, Gaston and Cordova returned to their respective ports, and their retirement shattered our last hopes of fighting and glory.

We were indignant. Both camps resounded with angry denunciations of the ministers, especially the Minister for the Marine. The invasion troops received the order to disband and return to their garrisons. I returned to Paris with the generals and staffs and we were soon breathing the atmosphere of general displeasure, which we all felt on account of the sad dénouement of a scene that had begun with so much glory.

While public opinion was breathing forth its discontent against the originators of the campaign which began so majestically and ended so ridiculously, it rained pamphlets and epigrams on all sides. I myself, while at the Paramé camp, wrote some couplets against the Minister for the Marine. They were

successful not because they were good, but because they were merry, malicious and in keeping with the spirit of the moment. A much quoted saying was that of the Duc de Choiseul: He said that *our Ministers' watches were always six months behind the right time.* I used that saying as the refrain for my couplets.

A short while after my return to Paris, I went to the King's hunt and he called me to his side. It is well known that the kindness of that monarch was usually concealed behind a rather rude mask, a somewhat hard look and a brusque tone.

"I've been told," he said to me rather sternly, "that you have taken the liberty of writing some very gay, naughty couplets, though rather scandalous and unbecoming."

Trying to overcome my embarrassment, I replied that I had grown weary of doing nothing in the camp while waiting to bear his arms into England and had been obliged to look about me for some sort of distraction.

"Very well," he said, "let's hear the song. Recite it to me."

I was about to obey him, and thereby cast myself upon the very rocks I wished to avoid. Happily a sudden thought stopped me just in time.

"Sir," I said, "unfortunately I have made a good number of songs. And I really don't know which one of them Your Majesty refers to."

"It is some rather outspoken couplets on jealousy deceived," the King answered.

Thereupon my trouble vanished. I softly sang to him the couplets, which certainly contained nothing political. He laughed at them very much and I was

LOUIS XVI

RECEIVING A DELEGATION FROM THE *PARLEMENT*

By P. P. Prudhon

very glad to have been able to escape in this way from a rather dangerous predicament.

When M. de Rochambeau and his army received the order to leave for America, the Vicomte de Noailles, my nephew, had been appointed second in command of the Soissonnais regiment and set out for the United States at the head of that body.

Thus, of the three friends who had pledged themselves to fight for the American cause, I alone was chained up by Fortune in our garrisons in France. It grieved me intensely. But the sudden change in our Government sustained my courage and revived my hopes. Public opinion had been so strongly hostile to two of our ministers that the Court felt obliged to choose men who would be likely to direct the war with all the energy it required. For this purpose the King confided the Ministry for War to my father, and that of the Marine to the Marquis de Castries.

The appointment of M. de Castries, however, preceded that of my father by several months. There was at that time a general dissatisfaction with the conduct of Prince de Montbarrey and M. de Sartine.

The latter had shown great ability in the administration of the police; but that did not qualify him for the Ministry for the Marine. Only the levity of M. de Maurepas can explain such a choice.

However, having once appointed him, he supported him against public opinion for some while. But when M. Necker declared that the administration of that department was loaded with a debt of twenty millions, the king decided to dismiss M. de Sartine. I can never make out why our kings have almost never been willing to entrust the management of the Navy to a naval man.

At that time the Queen had a great influence over her husband, and was very sincere in not using her position except for the general good. Hence she consulted public opinion as much as she could. And in spite of invidious calumnies, her friend, Mme de Polignac, told her the truth, and advised her not to confer her favour except on personalities of general esteem.

The reason for this is very simple. Mme de Polignac was utterly unlike any of the favourites, whose portraits have been drawn by history. She had no ambition for her family and no greed for herself. She had to be obliged to accept some benefits. She was a sincere friend and loved Marie Antoinette for herself and not the Queen. All her advice was marked by consideration for her and her glory.

The men of her intimate society were not exempt from intrigue and ambition. But they would not have enjoyed her friendship if they had not shown marks of a delicate honour and lofty sentiments. Thus, by their qualities they gave support to the good and useful opinions of Mme de Polignac.

The Queen's aim was to fight against the power of M. de Maurepas who was too much inclined on account of his light-mindedness and old habits to be guided in his selections more by intrigue than by merit.

M. de Castries' uprightness, courage and energy had gained for him the esteem of the public. He was not a dazzling genius, but he possessed a calm, firm and enlightened power of reason.

On the advice of her friend, the Queen suggested to the King that he should appoint M. de Castries. M. Necker strongly supported her views, and this time M. de Maurepas offered little resistance.

The same was not the case regarding my father's appointment. The Prime Minister stoutly maintained the candidature of Prince de Montbarrey, whose elevation to the Ministry for War was due to the friendship and solicitations of Mme de Maurepas.

A very brave and witty general, M. de Montbarrey was not fond of work, and could not resist the entreaties of women. He allowed himself to be governed by his underlings. He was desirous of what was good but hadn't the strength of will to do it. Yielding to the solicitations of courtiers, he came to grief on the rock which has brought about the shipwreck of so many a minister who has forgotten that justice, order and conformity to rule are the best ramparts for the defence of their respect and position.

The weight of public opinion brought about the fall of M. de Montbarrey in spite of M. de Maurepas' efforts. But though the Court was agreed on the necessity of his dismissal, it was several months before there was any agreement as to who was to be his successor.

It had come to the Queen's knowledge as a result of inquiries, that my father enjoyed great respect throughout the army on account of his long service, numerous wounds and constant study of the art of warfare and military administration. Much praise was given to his inflexible justice, moderation, love of discipline and disinterestedness.

Yet he lacked two very necessary qualities to reach the height of fortune. As a courtier he was not cunning, nor was he shifty in his principles. He lost sight of all interest as soon as it seemed to clash with his duty. His outspokenness was rather blunt. He knew how to render service but not to please. He was, in a word,

a perfect man of virtue but rather a bad courtier. His modesty would never have allowed him even to dream of becoming a minister.

His appointment was due to the zeal of his friends, who happened to be among those of Mme de Polignac. They were backed by the opinion of M. Necker and M. de Castries, and were engaged a long while on their designs without his knowledge.

As the Queen had never heard a word against my father, she thought she was making a good choice and spoke to the King about it.

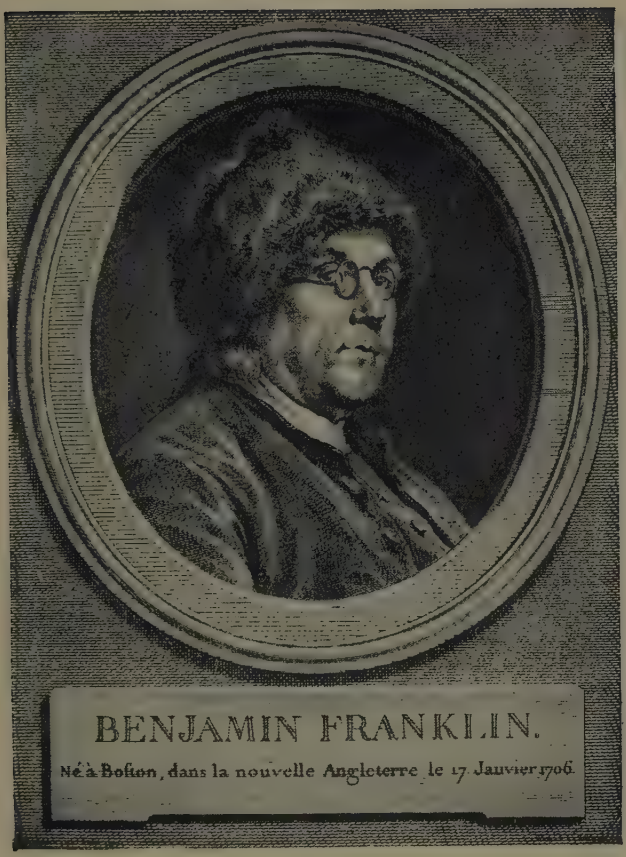
At first M. de Maurepas was somewhat put to his shifts regarding the conduct he was to pursue. Being the intimate friend of my grandmother, who was his contemporary, he knew my father better than anybody else and could not conscientiously make any objection to him.

However, the more he realised that the nomination was made in order to be approved, the more he perceived that it would entail the dismissal of M. de Montbarrey, whom he had hoped to maintain in his post.

Chance was more helpful to him than were his reflections. Hardly recovered from a long and violent attack of gout, my father went in too great a hurry to thank the Queen for her kindness towards him. In this way he appeared before the Court, pale, weak and scarcely able to walk.

M. de Maurepas was thereby afforded an opportunity to persuade the King that he had been given ridiculous advice in being asked to entrust to an exhausted man the ministry that demanded most work and energy.

The King believed him, and spoke to the Queen about it in rather a bad temper. The Queen re-



Drawn by Cochin

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proached Mme de Polignac for having placed her in a bad position.

Mme de Polignac was gentle but proud. The Queen's reproaches and tone offended her, and she offered her resignation. As she was very fond of her, the Queen was upset at the idea of separation, and gave her every assurance of her devotion. She listened to her explanations, and being satisfied with them, persisted in her interest on behalf of my father.

The King, however, was irresolute. This fact raised the hopes of M. de Maurepas. It was M. de Montbarrey himself who put an end to the state of uncertainty. Honestly dissatisfied with the unbecoming rôle which Mme de Maurepas' protection caused him to play, he resolved to get out of so unpleasant a situation, and, at the very moment it was least expected, offered his resignation to the King.

As this step was unknown to my father's friends, they had no time to take advantage of it. But M. de Maurepas, who could not go back on what he had told the King regarding my father, proposed to him that he should appoint Comte de Puységur in place of M. de Montbarrey.

The choice was certainly not a brilliant one. M. de Puységur was a distinguished, wise and experienced general. He had long been in close friendship with my father. I remember how, on this occasion, he came to see my father, and both of them, being little anxious for posts though very worthy to fill them, vowed to each other to leave everything to luck and to take no action whatever one against the other.

However, when Mme de Polignac heard from the Queen that the King was about to decide in favour of M. de Puységur, she told her that her interest

and dignity forbade her to allow M. de Maurepas' influence to triumph over her own without proper reason.

The Queen's conceit was wounded and she went to the King, called M. de Maurepas to his presence and reproached him with having allowed himself to be deceived or with having himself deceived the King by representing my father as an invalid and incapable of bearing the burden of office.

At the same time she asked him whether he had any other reasonable motive for opposing the advice she had given. Greatly embarrassed, M. de Maurepas could say nothing in answer. He even extolled my father, and the King gave him the order to inform my parent that he was appointed Minister for War.

The closest agreement existed among MM. Necker, de Castries, de Vergennes and my father. The only obstacle to their forward action and efforts was the indolence and levity of M. de Maurepas, who was scared by anything like bold resolution.

The only aim of this old man was to pass his remaining days in peace.

Opposed to all idea of reform or any vast plan of campaign, in which great successes can only be obtained by great risks, he would have liked to play at war without any big stakes. In fact, he wanted merely to parry and not to fight.

His little intrigues concerned him more than the great interests of the State. He treated the most solemn matters in a jesting manner, and the sceptre entrusted to him was like a rattle to amuse his second childhood.

However, his desire was fulfilled. His last days were free from storms. Towards the end of 1781

he quietly fell asleep, leaving Louis XVI out of his wardship and free to follow firmer and more useful advice.

The King appointed no Prime Minister, desiring to hold the reins of government himself.

A few months previously, M. Necker, who was cleverly managing the finances of the country, made a decision which was considered very useful by some and very dangerous by others. He printed and published the budget exactly as he had presented it to the King.

This was a great innovation in France and made a sort of revolution in people's minds. Till that time, the nation had been completely ignorant concerning its receipts, expenses, debts, the extent of its needs and the amount of its resources. It was the real *arcanum imperii* for all Frenchmen, even for the most enlightened classes.

This appeal to public opinion was also an appeal to liberty. Awakened to this capital point of its interests, the nation was not slow to realise that in the matter of accounts and taxes it ought not to be reduced to the sole obligation of paying, and that it had the right to examine and grant or refuse the charges imposed upon it.

This opinion was rapidly formed, and gradually manifested itself till, a few years later, it burst out with unforeseen violence.

The King, M. Necker and the other ministers failed to foresee any such result from a step which their love for the public welfare had dictated to them. As they thought only of the general good, they felt they had nothing to conceal. What indeed is to be feared on the part of a people when one is only concerned with making it happy?

Guided by the same motives and counsels, the King abolished the compulsory labour of land tenants and the serfdom of the soil which were the sad remains of the barbarous ages.

In the hope of founding a system of credit, which is an inexhaustible source of wealth but can only be established by confidence, M. Necker devised the plan of setting up provincial administrations throughout the kingdom.

It was the right way to accustom proprietors to public affairs, and to ensure their interest. If the plan had triumphed over the obstacles raised by intrigue against it, it would have assisted in the gradual education of the nation and there would not have been that wild rush for a phantom freedom through the violent quakes of a stormy revolution. Useful reform would have come little by little, and true liberty would have been acclimatised among us without any effort. But since it was fate's decree that the wise plan proposed by Necker and adopted by the King should not be properly carried out, it might perhaps have been better if it had never been known. For the more the plan was just, useful and popular, the more public opinion grew annoyed with private interests that hindered its success, and it was perhaps one of the principal germs of the fatal discords which arose later on between the plebeian class and the upper orders of the State.

M. Necker had succeeded by simple means in giving immense resources to the Government with which to meet the expenses of the war without increasing the taxes. He had filled the treasury by means of passing loans, the interest of which was to be paid by means of reforms and economies in the Court and luxury expenses.

COMTESSE L.-PH. DE SÉGUR
NÉE MARIE D'AGUESSEAU
By Mme. Vigée-Le Brun

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It showed a good way of doing business but a bad knowledge of men. He left out of account the power and number of persons, big and small, who were interested in the maintenance of abuses. He was to learn it at his own cost. Private interest gained the victory over the general interest, and the State was sacrificed to the Court.

On all sides the storm broke out. The enemies of M. Necker took advantage of a fault due to his self-conceit. Dissatisfied with the title of Director-General of Finance, he wanted to be minister in order to defend his projects in the King's council.

The Roman Catholic bigots were scandalised at the sight of a Protestant at the helm of the State, and the grand took offence at the pretentions of a simple banker of Geneva. All of them accused him of pride and ambition.

The King's confidence was shaken. As his chief defect was lack of confidence in his own lights, he thought he heard the voice of public opinion by listening to the views of the greater part of the courtiers around his throne. Overcoming his own affections, he yielded, and M. Necker was removed from office by the same adversaries who had obtained the sacrifice of M. Turgot and brought about the retirement of M. de Malesherbes.

This unhappy event did not take place till after the military success which the cleverness of this minister had facilitated.

The campaign of 1781, which saw so many seas covered with our ships, so many islands fall into our hands, and so many triumphs won by our armies in America and India, will always be a memorable and glorious epoch of the monarchy.

Thanks to the skill of M. de Vergennes, the King had succeeded in creating a formidable maritime league against England.

Glory accompanied our arms from the coast of America to the coast of Africa and the shores of India. America was delivered, the Dutch colonies restored and several English colonies conquered, while Florida and the Balearic Isles were handed back to Spain. Hyder-Ali was relieved and our Indian possessions returned to our hands. Suffren immortalised his name and our arms.

The British cabinet was discouraged and let the reins of government fall from its hands, being vanquished by a victorious opposition. The heads of the English armies were reduced to the defensive and shut themselves up in the fortresses of Charleston and New York. Two years later, in spite of Rodney's great naval victory over us, the British Government lost all hope of shackling America, and seeing our arms about to take away the last of its possessions in the Antilles, it was obliged to recognise the independence of the United States in 1783 and to sign with its enemies the most glorious peace which the kings of France had ever concluded.

While France was rejoicing over the success of her arms, which had placed her in the front row of the powers of Europe, public opinion was agitated by the great defects in the administration of home affairs. Murmurs, pamphlets and songs indicated the approach of a great explosion.

Nothing is stranger than the contradictions of the human mind. Those who governed the monarchy took arms against a king on behalf of two republics, and supported the cause of a people in rebellion. They

excited the whole of youth to admire republicans such as Franklin, Washington, John Adams, Gates and Green. Our flag led to victory the flag of Independence, and all our young aristocrats rushed to the coasts of America to get the principles of equality, contempt of privileges and hatred of all despotism, whether of Governments or priests.

Meanwhile the Court became anxious owing to the growing spirit of opposition, and forbade the newspapers to mention the name of M. Necker, whose adversaries were being publicly insulted by the people. Judge Durollet, the author of the opera *Iphigénie*, was subjected to bloody insults in the foyer of the Comédie for having spoken contemptuously of the disgraced minister. The theatres abounded in allusions to arbitary authority and unjust exile.

The Abbé Raynal's *Histoire Philosophique* was the object of general enthusiasm. It was not the real merit of the book that was admired but its violent denunciations of the priests, monarchical power and negro slavery. The author was not satisfied to write against so inhuman and irreligious a traffic, but seemed to provoke the unfortunate negroes to a revenge which has since become all too general and too cruel.

One ought to have profited by his advice and refuted his errors. But it was useless to ban a book that was in every library. Nevertheless, Séguier, the Attorney General, proceeded against the book with thunder and lightning. Its author was declared arrested and the book condemned to be burnt. The condemnation led to a sort of deification of the author. The celebrated Olavidès, who had just cleared and civilised the Sierra Morena, was thrown into the dreadful prisons of the

Inquisition, because he had translated the Abbé Raynal's work into Spanish. I remember his telling me, after he had escaped from his dungeon, that one of the most unbearable sorrows of his captivity was being condemned to read, night and morning, the works of Brother Louis of Grenada and those of another monk equally stupid. "Well," I said to him, "that was a revival of the tortures of the Ancients. You were 'condemned to the beasts.'"

No amount of service rendered, no rank, no authority sheltered one from that monkish tyranny. Even the conqueror of Florida, Admiral Solano, had a taste of it. A copy of the Abbé Raynal's book was found in his cabin. The chaplain of his vessel angrily threw the book into the sea, threatened him with arrest by the Inquisition, and obliged him to do public penance to expiate his fault.

Though still young and carried away by the spirit of the age, I was not totally blinded by that whirlwind to the weird effect of our contradictions. I can never forget my astonishment when I heard the entire Court in the playroom at Versailles enthusiastically applaud Voltaire's tragedy *Brutus*, especially the lines:

> Je suis fils de Brutus, et je porte en mon cœur
> La liberté gravée et le rois en horreur.*

Not all the King's Council were agreed concerning these contradictory measures. The Keeper of the Seals and the Minister for Paris were the only ones who recommended such rigorous action. They carried on an awkward struggle with public opinion, combating

* I am the son of Brutus, and I hold
Freedom engraved in my heart and kings in horror.

with orders and arrests the cause of liberty, which the Government was helping elsewhere with its armed forces. They were like the toreadors of Spain who goad the bull with slight wounds till they change his anger into fury. They imprudently irritated public opinion instead of softening and enlightening it.

As the nobility of France had no other career but that of arms, the Ministry for War was subject more than any other to solicitations, intrigues and manœuvres, the importunities of the great and the caprices of favouritism. Each prince wanted to hasten the advance of those attached to him. Each of the great personages of the State pushed the interests of relations and protégés.

The Queen herself, being, through natural kindness, rarely able to resist the pleasure of granting favours, constantly set a strain on the firmness of the minister who wished to maintain the regulations. Sometimes she reproached my father with failing to be complaisant and grateful towards her. Once or twice she was annoyed by his refusals, and to get her way she made use of her influence over the King.

The brother of a great official at Court had given rise to much unfavourable talk on account of his weak and uncertain behaviour. Public opinion had still more severely blamed him when he was employed at the head of a corps in the Corsican war. He begged to be given the post of inspector-general, which was considered very important in those days.

My father wished to give it to one of the older and more respected generals. The Queen, however, persuaded the King to order my father to appoint the other man. He obeyed, but at the same time he offered his

resignation to the King, who refused to accept it. When the new inspector came, according to custom, to thank the minister, the latter answered that "he had nothing to be grateful to him for, that he had always opposed a favour so ill-deserved and that it was to the Queen alone that he owed his preference."

The bad temper of that Princess was extreme. She sent for me and went into all the details of all the occasions of dissatisfaction my father had given her. I told her how unfortunate it was that princes should allow themselves to be deceived and annoyed by the persons who surrounded them and were constantly trying to make them sacrifice the general interest to private gain. "My father will never forget, Madam," I added, "that he owes his elevation to your Majesty. But he does not believe he can show you his gratefulness better than by serving the King faithfully and conscientiously. You have an army to serve you, and not to give you pleasure. It will lose all desire of emulation, if one goes on, as in the past, preferring influence to merit and birth to services. Your Majesty has seen into what a deplorable state the army was reduced a short while ago by the complaisance and weakness of a minister, who roused all public opinion against him. All the great persons of your Court wanted to have commands. There wasn't a bishop who didn't claim to nominate somebody colonel, not a pretty woman or an abbé who didn't want to make somebody captain. These abuses have ceased. Order is being restored. Hope is reviving. Why would you suffer such a great good to last so short a time?"

"But," the Queen replied, "I am not asking for anything unjust. I only wish to have the preference

given to military men who have done good service, and whose name and devotion deserve consideration. Your father has had none for me. He wants to deprive me of all means of pleasing. His meticulous rules, which he always holds out against me, lay him open to the reproach of hardness and pedantry. He is a real bar of iron. He doesn't look upon devotion to the King and Queen as a sufficient title. I never dreamed when I got him appointed minister that he would cross me so constantly, and deprive me of my dearest pleasure, which is to do good and render service to the persons who merit it by their attachment to us."

"Madam," I said, "though unaware of it, you have been deceived by those who seek your protection. They take good care not to tell you that they haven't had the necessary time of service or that their negligences are far from deserving advancement. And most of them allow you to be ignorant of the fact that their competitors have far better rights."

"Very well," replied the Queen. "That may happen sometimes, but why doesn't your father come and explain his motives to me instead of giving a blunt and unbecoming refusal?"

"He would certainly like to, Madam, but your occupations and his own rarely leave him the possibility."

"Listen," she said to me with the graciousness familiar to her, "I am willing to believe that he has no intention of disobliging me. I rely upon his gratitude, I even respect his rather rude severity. I admit that my easy-going nature is often the cause of my giving recommendations on behalf of persons whose titles I may not be well aware of. I like that nobody should

leave my presence dissatisfied. But to avoid all these annoyances I desire, each time I insist upon a demand, that your father should come and talk it over with me or charge you to explain his reasons for not satisfying me."

I was very glad to take these kind words to my father. He behaved exactly as the Queen prescribed. And I must say that whenever a difficulty arose concerning any important nominations, the Queen accepted in good part all the refusals with which my father resisted intrigue, and which I was several times deputed to explain.

If my father met with ungrateful and dissatisfied people in spite of his just dealings, I must confess that I was in some degree among them. For notwithstanding all my entreaties, he refused to make any exception in my favour, and refused to let me go to America to join my fighting companions.

At last my desire was granted. Vicomte de Noailles, after the capture of Yorktown, was given the command of a regiment in France, and I was appointed in his stead to be second-in-command of the Soissonnais regiment. I left the Orleans dragoons without regret, in spite of my affection for them, and received the order to set sail for the United States to join my new regiment there.

Having so long desired to fight, I looked forward to a bright and brilliant campaign that would end the war with the capture of New York, and perhaps after that with the capture of Jamaica. Such in fact was the aim of the Cabinet.

When I arrived at Brest at the beginning of April, 1782, I found several frigates waiting for us, as well

GARDE-FRANÇAISE

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as a numerous convoy of merchant vessels and transport ships, which we were to escort. At the same port were two battalions of recruits destined to reinforce the army of Rochambeau.

I was ordered to take over the command of them and to train them till the time came for their departure.

Hearing of our preparations, and favoured by the winds, an English squadron sailed up before the road and blocked us, intending to attack us and capture our convoy. At the same time we learnt the sad news of M. de Grasse's defeat, but it merely served to increase our ardour.

At last the winds changed, and we looked forward to getting out of the port, which was like a prison to us. We received the order to leave our convoy at Brest and to embark on *La Gloire*, a frigate of thirty-two cannon, which carried about twelve.

On board the *Gloire* with me were the Duc de Lauzun, Prince de Broglie, son of the Maréchal, Baron de Montesquieu, grandson of the author of *L'Esprit des Lois*, Comte de Loménie, who was doomed to perish in the Revolution, an Irish officer named Sheldon, a Polish gentleman named Polarski, Baron de Liliehorn, aide-de-camp to the King of Sweden, and the Chevalier Alexandre de Lameth, who afterwards rendered great service to his country.

His love of liberty and our friendship date from that moment.

It would have been hard to find a pleasanter travel-companion than the Duc de Lauzun. He had an easy-going character, a generous nature and charming elegance. He showed me a short letter of M. de Maurepas, to whom he had recommended a certain

affair. It gave one a good idea of the old minister's lively character and trifling nature. "I have not," he wrote, "been able to do what you desire. You have nobody behind you in this matter except the King and me. That's what comes of going to the dogs."

CHAPTER X

On the Ocean

At last the signal for our departure was given, a new passenger, Vicomte de Vaudreuil, came aboard, and we set sail on the 19th May, 1782, with a breeze strong enough to give us hopes of escaping the vigilance of the English fleet. But we had hardly gone three leagues when a violent tempest forced us to change our course and to enter the dangerous passage known as the Raz de Tulinguet, which was a notorious place for shipwrecks.

Bravely struggling against winds and rocks, we managed to reach the open, when we were obliged, by the approach of twenty-two English vessels, to hug the coast very closely. As the squalls became more and more violent we were in great danger of running on to the reefs known as *les Glenans*, on which the frigate *Venus* had been wrecked a short while before.

At last the storm gave place to calm. But our ship's rudder was broken. We were therefore obliged to enter the Loire and put in at Paimbœuf. Thus Fortune seemed to take pleasure in crossing our desires and keeping us in France.

Till July 15th we did nothing but run from port to port, being first ordered to set sail and then told to put

our departure off. From Brest we went to Nantes, from Nantes to Lorient, and from there we went to Rochefort, where we found *l'Aigle*, a frigate of forty guns carrying twenty-four-pounders, which was to sail with us to America.

Baron de Viominil and the Duc de Lauzun went on board *l'Aigle*, together with many other officers. The commander of our frigate was the Chevalier de Vallongue, an old Navy officer, who had not succeeded, in spite of his skill and long service, in getting beyond the rank of lieutenant.

The Chevalier de La Touche was in command of the *Aigle*. He was a brave, witty, pleasant and well-educated man, but had only recently begun service at sea. His many friends, and the support of the Duc d'Orleans, had favoured his advancement. He held the rank of ship's captain, and it was not without a certain ill-temper that M. de Vallongues found himself under the orders of an officer with less service than himself, and who was what was called at the time "an upstart in the Navy."

M. de La Touche loved his profession, and fulfilled his duties with intelligence and honour. However, at the time of his departure he was induced by a besetting passion to commit a rather serious fault, which caused us much unpleasantness and resulted in a mishap, of which he had to bear the brunt.

He had been followed from Paris to La Rochelle by a woman, with whom he was violently in love. The regulations forbade him to take her on board his frigate, but he could not make up his mind to leave her behind. It will presently be seen what a strange shift he was put to in order to reconcile his love with his duty. We set sail on July 15th, together with a

DISTRIBUTION OF DRY FODDER IN A GERMAN VILLAGE
By Chantreau

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fairly numerous merchant convoy escorted by the frigate *Cérès*.

In the middle of the night, a short while after our departure, while our crews were busy manœuvring against a contrary wind, the *Cérès* tacked very unskilfully and ran against our frigate with such violence that we all thought we had struck a rock.

The shock, however, did us no damage. But the *Cérès* suffered so much that it was obliged to leave us and return to port with its convoy. On the following days we made little way, the wind being very weak. Nevertheless we were rightly surprised at our slowness, for we knew that the *Aigle* was a much better sailing vessel than our own, and yet we were constantly obliged to slacken sail in order not to get too far ahead.

At length we noticed that a trading vessel was sailing in the track of the *Aigle*. As it was impossible for such a vessel to sail like a warship, we soon perceived that after a number of messages and boat parleys had been exchanged, the commander of the *Aigle* had decided to take the trader in tow.

The mystery was then cleared up, and we became aware that it was M. de La Touche's mistress that had been the cause of his delay and that he wanted to hitch her along with him in this fashion. Our navigation was naturally very slow on that account. Moreover we were troubled by frequent calms, so that we took three weeks to get to the Azores. As we had many sick men aboard and feared to run out of water, M. de La Touche decided to put in at one of the ports of the archipelago.

During all that tiresome crossing we had no other distraction but the sight of several vessels to which we

gave chase, in accordance with the orders of Captain de La Touche, hoping all the time that we were going to find an enemy, do battle and carry off the victory. But each time our hopes were deceived, for when we got near the ships we discovered they were either neutrals or allies.

The Azores archipelago belongs to the Portuguese. Ships generally put in at Fayal, but the wind being contrary, we should have lost too much time, and being in the neighbourhood of Tercera, the principal island, we went to Angra, the capital.

When we caught sight of the island of Tercera, it looked to us like a great dark mountain, but on nearing Angra, we enjoyed a very pleasant view. The dark mountain took on a brighter colour and only the summit kept its arid appearance. The mountain descends slowly from its peak to the sea and displays a magnificent amphitheatre covered with fragrant woods, which are varied in form and colour. They are picturesquely situated and disclose here and there all sorts of fields and fertile plantations.

At the lower end of the bay is the town of Angra which rises majestically along the mountainside.

The inhabitants of Tercera were delighted to see foreigners. They told me that in the space of sixty years they had only seen a few passengers from a French vessel and two English ships. And none of them had remained three or four days as we did. They were entirely ignorant of other nations. Hence with regard to enlightenment they are two centuries behind us. Their wines, corn, cattle and oranges have no market but Lisbon and the ports of Brazil.

The Government of the Archipelago resides at Angra. The other islands send deputies to form the Governor's

council. At the time of our visit, the Governor was a member of one of the chief families of Portugal. His troops were few and ill-dressed, but they were sufficient for the protection of an island which nobody wants to attack, and which has so few convenient landing-places. Those that exist are pretty well protected by batteries.

As soon as I landed, I went to the French consul, whose name was Peyrez. He had been penniless in his youth, and went to Portugal to make his fortune. Business had taken him to Tercera, where the charms of a dusky native had fixed him for life.

He was the least busy of all the consuls of the world, and was delighted to receive his compatriots. He did his best to entertain us, as did also Senora Peyrez, who did not seem to be upset at seeing a few men for the first time without being compelled to peep at them through a latticed window.

He had almost forgotten his native country, was unaware of what was happening in other lands, loved only his copper-coloured companion, and admired nothing beyond his little bungalow, which he called his pleasure house, and a walk of lemon trees which crossed his park. His farm of five hundred acres had only cost him eight hundred livres.

When I returned to my frigate, rather tired of my trip, I felt little temptation to go back to Tercera, but the Duc de Lauzun made me change my mind. "I see you didn't find it very amusing," he said. "It's your own fault. Why did you take it into your head to visit the French consul? He is a plain and honest fellow who cares for nothing but his lemon-tree walk, knows just enough to do a bit of cooking, offers you nothing but the water of his well which is rather too fresh, and

his milk that isn't fresh enough. I've always found better ways of driving away the blues and satisfying my curiosity. Come with me. You'll see the best of all there is in Tercera: a good fare, a good reception, a jolly host, pretty women, obliging nuns, coquettish and tender-hearted convent-girls, and a bishop that dances the fandango to perfection."

"You're mad!" I replied. "And who may this man be, that has suddenly shown you such an obliging friendship?"

"The English consul," he replied.

"How!" I exclaimed. "We're at war with England and yet you go to the consul of that nation for your sport?"

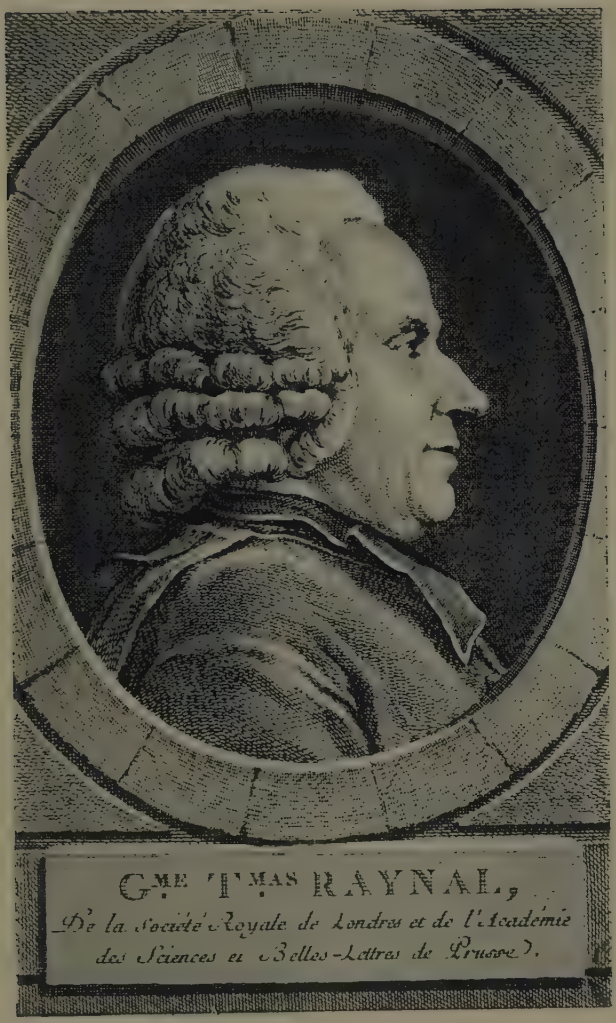
"Wait a bit!" he said. "Don't judge too rashly. My host is indeed the consul for England, our enemy, but he's a collector of jobs, for he is also consul for Spain, our ally, and what's more, he's neither English nor Spanish, but a Frenchman from Provence."

"He only lacks one thing to make him the possessor of all possible qualifications and that is to be a bailiff of the Inquisition," I replied.

"Well, friend," said Lauzun, laughing. "I believe he lacks nothing."

"If that's so," I replied, "I've no objection to make."

So we set out, Lauzun, Prince de Broglie, Vicomte de Fleury and myself, with one or two other friends, and were introduced to the English consul, who fulfilled all that was promised of him. He gave us excellent tea, very good port wine, an exquisite supper and the company of some very pleasant women. As we were very anxious to see the fandango danced, a youn



ABBÉ RAYNAL
By Cochin

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Portuguese, the coadjutor bishop of the Bishop of Angra, had the kindness, with very little entreaty, to dance it before us.

That was not all. The obliging consul took us next morning to a convent where we saw some indulgent nuns and very pretty school girls. Their rather swarthy complexion in no way detracted from the charm of their beautiful dark eyes, white teeth and shapeliness. The sight of them made up for the fearful double grating which separated the visitors' room from the interior of the convent.

Followed by her young cohort, the Mother Abbess arrived solemnly behind the grating with the kind of dress, figure and face one sees in the portraits of abbesses of the XIIIth century. The likeness was remarkable, even as regards the crozier, which she held majestically in her hand.

After the opening compliments the ladies sat down, and our encouraging consul told us that in accordance with Portuguese custom and in spite of the presence of the Mother Abbess with her crook, we might be as gallant as we liked towards her young flock, because religious devoutness and amorous gallantry had always reigned together in the cloisters of chivalrous Portugal.

Each of us, therefore, chose the girl that appealed to him the most and seemed to show most response to his glances. Hence we very soon talked about love, though very innocently and platonically owing to the presence of the two gratings and the Abbess.

It may be difficult to realise how we managed to make one another understand, as the girls knew no French and we were ignorant of Portuguese. But nothing was

impossible with our obliging consul. He undertook to be our interpreter, and thereby smoothed away the first difficulty of the conversation.

The signal for this gallant conversation was given by a young boarder named Senhora Dona Maria Emegilina Francisca Genoveve del Marcellos di Connicullo di Garbo. Struck by the good looks and costume of Lauzun, who was in hussar's uniform, she laughingly threw a rose at him through the grating, asked his name and offered him the corner of her handkerchief, which he seized, while she tried to draw it back. A tender vibration seemed to pass pretty quickly from hand to heart.

We all eagerly followed their example. Handkerchiefs were soon fluttering on either side of the grating and flowers were thrown. As the young Portuguese girls threw us looks which seemed to indicate a strong desire to overturn the grating, we replied by throwing kisses to them, though not without fearing the Abbess would think us too daring. Our fun, however, did not disturb her in the least. So we went on kissing the corners of the handkerchiefs while the girls in their turn kissed the end that remained in their grasp.

Presently we tried to turn into Portuguese what little Italian we knew. The attempt was successful, and the ladies imitated our example, so that our conversation became more direct and gave the consul a chance to talk with the Mother Abbess.

After a while the latter took part in the conversation, and realising perhaps that our pleasure was not without a certain amount of surprise, she told us through the consul that pure love was very agreeable in the sight of God. She added: "These young persons, to whom I let you offer your homage, will have known how to

please, and will one day be more agreeable to their husbands, while those who are destined to the cloister will have exercised the sensibility of their soul and the warmth of their imagination and therefore they will love the Divinity all the more. On the other hand, this form of gallantry, which was formerly much prized, cannot fail to be very useful to young fighting men. It will inspire you with the spirit of chivalry. It will stir you to great actions so that you may merit the heart of the lovely ones you love, and it will induce you to do honour to their choice by covering yourselves with glory."

I do not know whether the consul translated her words faithfully, but the fire in the Abbess's eyes, her dignity, tone and crozier almost made me feel I had been transported to some old enchanted isle of Ariosto and was back in the good old times of the paladins.

Encouraged by such advice, I entered into the gallant game with increased ardour, and the pretty handkerchief of the lady of my thoughts fluttered more than ever. She was not so rich in Christian names as her companions, for the lady that favoured Prince de Broglie was called Dona Eugenia - Euphemia - Athanasia - Marcellina di Antonios di Mello. Mine was called much more modestly Dona Marianna-Isabella del Carmo, and at the time I would not have been unwilling to break a lance with anyone who dared to say she was not the loveliest of all.

As variety is the soul of pleasure, we gave up exchanging glances, pocket-handkerchiefs, messages, and kisses blown through the grating, and ventured to write love-letters. They were handed in by the obliging consul. The good Abbess read them without forsaking her

crozier or her dignity and smilingly allowed the tender missives, and the answers they elicited to pass to and fro.

I ventured to sing a song, and Prince de Broglie backed me up. I don't know whether our couplets were embellished or spoilt by the consul's translation, but everybody seemed to find them charming.

The day began to draw to a close. The Abbess gave the signal to retire. Touching adieux were exchanged. A second rendez-vous was arranged for the next day and it need not be said that we turned up very punctually.

On our arrival at the convent, we found the grating adorned with all kinds of flowers, and our ladies infinitely more lovely than the previous day. They performed some music for our enjoyment. The friend of Prince de Broglie and the favourite of the Duc de Lauzun sang a very sweet duet, accompanying themselves on the guitar.

Meanwhile Vicomte de Fleury's mistress and mine danced with us. On either side of the grating we did our best to figure the steps which the dismal barrier prevented us from doing in the real way. It was very amusing to see the Abbess beat time with her crozier.

Dona Euphemia then sang an impromptu song, alluding to *La Passion* and that which Lauzun inspired in her.

To show you what a practical and inventive mind the consul had, I must tell you that when we found the distance between the two gratings too great to allow us to pass our love-letters to an fro, our alert interpreter fished out a shovel from somewhere and embarked our letters in it so that they easily came to port.

It is well known that in love as in ambition, it is hard to know when to stop. We asked for a few love-tokens. Our wish was granted, and we received locks of hair and scapulars which we pressed to our hearts.

In return we sent back rings and snips of hair. Lauzun and Vicomte de Fleury happened to have their portraits in their pockets, so they offered them to their lady-loves.

I received a scapular from Marianna-Isabella. She told me it would bring me good luck, and that I should be protected against accident and illness as long as it hung round my neck. I promised her never to part with it. But her prophecy was not fulfilled, for a few days later I was stricken with fever, and was shipwrecked on the coast of America and lost all my baggage. Our platonic love in the visitors' room gave rise to no small alarm in the town. Brothers, uncles and gallants grew uneasy. The rumour spread that we had slyly asked the girls to tell us how we could visit them without the grating and scale the garden wall at night. I don't know what might have happened. Perhaps our little romance might have ended in the ancient Spanish and Portuguese style with interrupted serenades and clash of swords. Certain it is that when we left the convent, we saw several men in large mantles and broad hats who were obviously upon the watch.

However this may be, the rising wind or the prudence of M. de la Touche promptly dissipated all hopes and alarms. The signal for our departure was given. The firing of three guns called us aboard and we only just had time to say good-bye to our lady-loves, who were quite inconsolable.

The convent gratings were mournfully decked with garlands of scabious which the girls called flowers of

regret, or in their language, saudades. The good Abbess's eyes were moist with tears. I believe she dropped her crozier for the first time in her life. Each Senora gave us a pansy, which we attached to our cockades, and a pocket handkerchief, which they damped with their tears. At last we departed, bearing their images engraven in our hearts.

We expected to continue sailing towards the south in the hope of coming across the trade winds, and it was not without some surprise that we saw M. de la Touche head for the north-east. We soon learnt the cause of this change.

Apart from the two million five hundred pounds which the *Aigle* was taking to America, M. de La Touche was in charge of sealed orders which he was not to open till he got beyond the Azores. He must have felt very uneasy when he opened them, for they ordered him to avoid all fighting and pursuit which might cause delay, because the despatches contained the plan of operations for a new campaign and it was necessary that the plan should reach, as soon as possible, Count de Rochambeau and the Marquis de Vaudreuil, the head of our naval forces, who were waiting for us at one of the ports of America.

Ashamed of having navigated so slowly on account of the merchant ship bearing his mistress and of having given chase without necessity to all the ships he had sighted, M. de La Touche thought to make up for lost time by taking the quickest route to the American coast. The outcome proved that he was mistaken, for the merchant ship he abandoned, when he went to the Canary Islands in search of the trade winds, arrived at the mouth of the Delaware the same day as ourselves.

Frequent calms caused us to lose more than a fortnight. We only made one capture. It came so close to us that we could not avoid taking it. It was a poor little English ship with a cargo of apples and fruit, but even that was a treasure in the midst of a long navigation without water and refreshments.

We put out our lights very early every evening so that we might not be seen by any ship, for we had been warned that an English squadron had been ordered to oppose our course and to capture the two million pounds we had on board. In spite of these precautions we had to put up a lively fight with a warship. The fight reflected much credit on our commanders and crews.

We were off the Bermudas when in the middle of the night of the 4th of September, we suddenly heard cries. It was the voice of a man struggling against the waves. He was one of the *Aigle's* crew, and had fallen off a yard into the sea, unknown to his companions. Fortunately we were near the *Aigle* and launched a boat to rescue the unlucky man.

Our lights were once more extinguished and everything was dark and calm. Presently an officer warned us that he perceived a vessel approaching us through the dusk.

Immediately the signal was given to prepare for action. We rose and armed ourselves in haste. In less than three minutes all the hammocks and movables were cleared away, partitions were removed, and the batteries put in order. Each man ran to his post and all was ready for combat.

Nor was it all without cause. The darkness was so dense that the ship could not be distinguished till it was within musket shot. There was very little wind,

but the distance between us grew less every moment as we were running on opposite tacks.

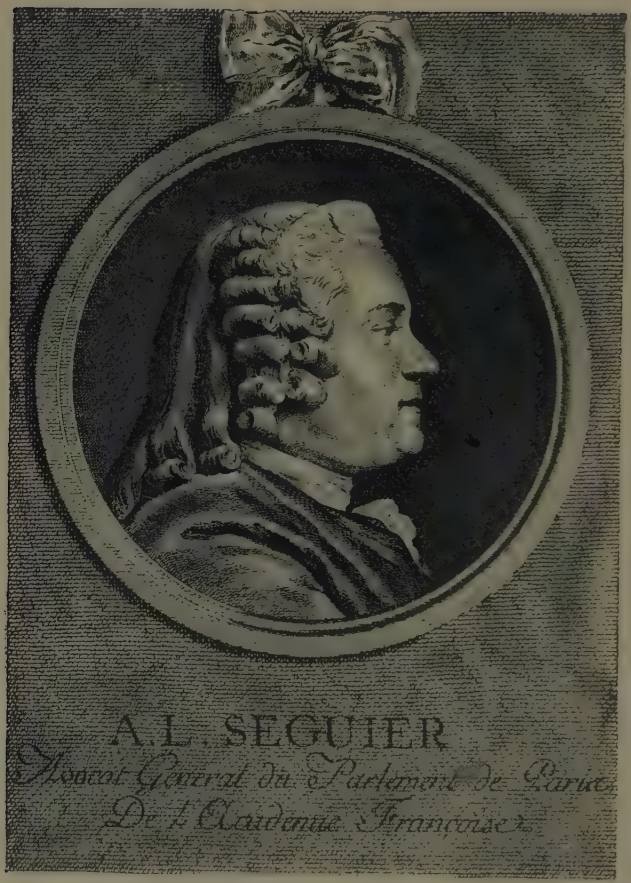
We had very bad night-glasses on board *la Gloire*. Hence, forming a wrong idea of the vessel's dimensions, we mistook it for a merchant ship. However, the *Aigle*, which had better glasses and sailing to windward of us, drew near and M. de La Touche called out to us to steer away, as the ship was a man of war. The noise of the waves prevented us from making out all his words.

Nevertheless, the ship fired a gun in order to bring us to. It was already too late to take advantage of the wind and get away. Moreover, the unknown ship was athwart of us and fired a second gun, which hindered us from continuing our conversation with the *Aigle*. We had nothing to do but to return the fire we had received.

Meanwhile, thinking we had heard its warning, the *Aigle* was already some distance away. When M. de La Touche perceived that we were not following him, he fired off five guns, the signal agreed upon for rallying. At that moment the approaching vessel lit up one of its batteries and we saw that it was at least a frigate.

Our commander was in a very critical situation. If he failed to obey the order to rally, he ran the risk of being accused of ignoring M. de La Touche's authority through jealousy. On the other hand, to obey the order meant exposing the stern of our ship to the fire of the enemy's whole battery.

Nevertheless, M. de Vallongue decided to obey, saying that our act of submission might cost us very dear. We turned about and had scarcely presented our stern to the enemy, when we received a full broadside from him, which caused us great loss.


A. L. SEGUIER
Avocat General du Parlement de Paris
De l'Academie Françoise

To face p. 125

Nothing was more urgent than to get out of that bad situation at once. We did so very speedily, thanks to M. Gandeau, an officer of the merchant marine, who was acting as lieutenant on board our ship. Seeing that M. de Vallongue was ill at ease and hesitating, he ordered a manœuvre which brought us completely astern of the enemy and we then returned his broadside with such good effect that fire broke out aboard him almost immediately.

M. de Vallongue embraced the lieutenant with a degree of generosity that delighted us. He thanked him, and declared that he would not give another order during the fight without consulting him.

As soon as the enemy ship received our lively answer, she tacked also to starboard, so that we found ourselves alongside, running in the same direction and within pistol shot.

The firing continued. Then the enemy unmasked his second battery, and we saw that we had to do with a ship of seventy-four guns. It was the *Hector*, taken from us in the defeat of M. de Grasse. Alongside this vessel, our little frigate seemed hardly bigger than a skiff. Already its thirty-six pounders pierced our ship from side to side.

Thinking he could not escape defeat, M. de Vallongue wished at least to honour it with a piece of daring. He took a speaking trumpet and cried out to the captain of the other vessel that before going on killing one another they ought to make it clear whether they were friend or foe.

He asked whether the vessel was English or French, and the captain of the *Hector* having replied that it was English, M. de Vallongue audaciously called out to him in English:

* "*Streng your colour*" (which means in French: Haul down your flag).

"*Yes, yes, I'll do*," said the captain.

And a terrible broadside completed his answer. We replied, and thus the affair continued in a lively manner.

After the fight had begun, the *Aigle* decided to come to our aid, but arrived very slowly on account of the slight wind. By the time it joined us we had already been under the enemy's fire for more than three quarters of an hour.

As soon as we saw the frigate arrive we made way for it, and made off to try and repair the damage done by the enemy's cannon-balls, which had caused us to leak in several places.

The *Aigle* put up a good fight and went so close to the enemy that the men fought with their cannon-rammers. The yards of the ship got hooked in those of the frigate, and Baron de Vioménil and the officers with him immediately shouted "Board her!" with such energy and ardour that the enemy captain cut the cables which kept his vessel in contact with the *Aigle*.

He was said to have been wounded by our fire. His crew was a weak one. The vessel had a lot of sick men, and carried a good number of French prisoners.

Having broken loose, the *Aigle* gave fire so luckily that one of its twenty-four pounders broke the *Hector's* rudder. After that, the *Aigle* got somewhat farther away, and continued cannonading the enemy in her quarters. Meanwhile we returned to the fight, having passed athwart the *Hector* and received her broadside. As we saw that she could no longer

* These words, meant for English, occur in the original.

manœuvre we came up behind her, and cannonaded her at our ease from poop to prow, while the only reply she could make was with two small stern-chasers.

Thus, being much favoured by fortune, we were looking forward to mastering the *Hector*. But at day-break, we discovered a lot of sails on the horizon, so we hoisted our own and steered away. We learnt later that the *Hector* was shortly afterwards overtaken by a storm and sank, while an American ship that happened to be within reach saved the captain and a part of his crew.

There is an account of this fight in *Les Annales de la Marine*. It is quoted as one of the most glorious for the French flag. M. de La Touche was overwhelmed with praise, and M. de Vallongue was promoted to ship's captain.

The losses of the two frigates were thirty or forty killed and about a hundred wounded. *La Gloire* was badly damaged and leaked, the pump being at work for the rest of our voyage. No greater ardour, courage and discipline could have been displayed than was shown by our men in that fight. Prince de Broglie's fearlessness was worthy of his father. Nothing was more remarkable than the self-control, bravery and calm gaiety of Alexandre de Lameth.

In the midst of all that confusion of fire and darkness, silence and cries, the surge of the waves, the thunder of the cannon, the hissing of the musket balls, the moans of the wounded, and the noise of falling yards and broken tackle, French gaiety was still to the fore.

Alexandre de Lameth and I were on quarter-deck at the time of the enemy's hottest fire. In passing by us,

M. de Vallongue fell halfway down a hatchway, which had been left open. Thinking he had been cut in two by the English broadside, we rushed forward to help him and were relieved, on picking him up, to find him safe and sound.

Near us was Baron de Montesquieu. We had lately been teasing him with regard to the expression *Dangerous liaisons*, which he had heard us mention, and which we had refused to explain to him, in spite of his entreaties, as being in reality the title of a very fashionable novel in France.

Just as we were standing together, a broadside of the *Hector* hurled a twin cannon ball at us. This deadly instrument is composed of two cannon balls joined together with a bar of iron. It smashed a part of the quarter-deck. Count de Lomenie, who was standing next to Montesquieu, pointed to the twin cannon ball and said to him, very dryly:

"You wanted to know what *dangerous liaisons* were. Look at that; it will show you."

Though we had been so depressed by the slowness of our navigation, we were now delighted with the result of our fight, and with the approaching end of our voyage. On September 11th we sighted land. We were only five leagues off. The coast was very low, and at first we could only descry a few trees, that seemed to emerge from the water.

Presently we recognised Cape James, which forms the southern point of the entrance to the Bay of the Delaware, and we had some difficulty in making for the bay as it lay to the north-west of us, and the wind was coming right from that direction. Nevertheless we had no doubt of getting there. On approaching the bay, we saw a corvette come out, while riding in the wind

MAN OF WAR

By Ozanne

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at sea were several large ships which we took for English men-of-war.

The corvette, which was also English, apparently took us for frigates of her own nation, which she had left the previous day. She came towards us with an imprudent confidence, and did not make her private signals till she was very near us.

Presently she realised that we were enemies, and she started to flee. But it was too late. In trying to escape from the *Gloire* which gave chase, she was obliged to pass within reach of the *Aigle*, who raked her with a brisk fire. After a few cannon balls, she surrendered. But as the sea was running very high, we lost a couple of hours in taking possession of her. The delay was very unfortunate.

The enemy squadron at sea was under a foul wind, and unable to help the corvette in time. After we had manned our capture, we continued our way towards the bay, though rather slowly as we had no pilot, and the river was full of shifting sand-banks.

These difficulties caused M. de La Touche to decide at evening to anchor off Cape James, and to send a boat ashore to fetch a pilot. But fate was against us. A violent wind sprang up, the sky became overcast, the sea raged, and the waves submerged our boat. The officer and two sailors in it swam to the shore. The rest of the crew perished in the waves.

We were unaware of this disaster, and M. de La Touche, thinking that the return of the boat was delayed by the darkness, lighted some lights and let off some rockets.

The enemy squadron was thereby given to know that we had not yet entered the Delaware. To crown our misfortune, the wind changed. It blew from the open,

and was therefore favourable to the English to bear down upon us.

In fact, at daybreak we saw two warships and several frigates coming towards us in full sail. We promptly cut our cables and entered the river without a pilot.

The sand banks divide the bed of the river into four or five channels. To navigate properly, we should have taken the south part near the bank and run across the river from south to north-west between the banks, and then we should have been near the north bank in a very good channel, where we could have navigated without risk as far as Philadelphia. But that is what we were unable to know, since we had no pilot and couldn't see the banks hidden under the water.

We therefore took the middle of the river, hoping to find more water there. Unfortunately it was the worst part. Fearing to founder, we went very slowly, fathoming the while and having very few sails.

The English had pilots on board and were following us rapidly. Every moment we saw their ships getting bigger and bigger and the distance between us growing smaller. It was like a dreadful nightmare. The *Aigle* struck a bank but managed to right itself. As we passed near him, M. de La Touche ordered us, in the event of our foundering, to cut the masts, sink the frigate and to save as many men as we could in our boats.

However, the English were only two cannon-shots away from us. In this desperate situation we were already about to make ready for an unequal fight, which left no doubt as to its issue, for we had to do with six or seven enemy ships, among which were some ships

of the line. Prince William of England was aboard one of them.

We had lighted our links. Consternation seized our crews, when we saw the English vessels that had followed us suddenly turn and retire. Two of their big ships had touched bottom, and Admiral Elphingston, their commander, dared not advance any farther up this dangerous channel.

Reassured by the cessation of their pursuit, and seeing that the sloop we had captured went ahead of us without any obstacle, we slowly continued our way. When we were at a distance of about six cannon shots from the English, we cast anchor and the enemy did the same.

Thereupon the land and sea commanders who were aboard our frigates met on board the *Aigle* to hold a council. Some were of a mind to cast anchor and perish fighting; others were for continuing our route in the hope that at least one of our vessels would succeed in overcoming the obstacles in our way. Meanwhile M. Gandeau, the brave officer of the sunken boat, brought us two American pilots from ashore. But though their presence would have overwhelmed us with joy a couple of hours previously, their information deprived us of all hope.

They informed us that we were in an ever-narrowing channel, and would be stopped altogether by an impassable sandbank farther on. They added that to regain the good channel we should have to go back to the very spot where the English were anchored.

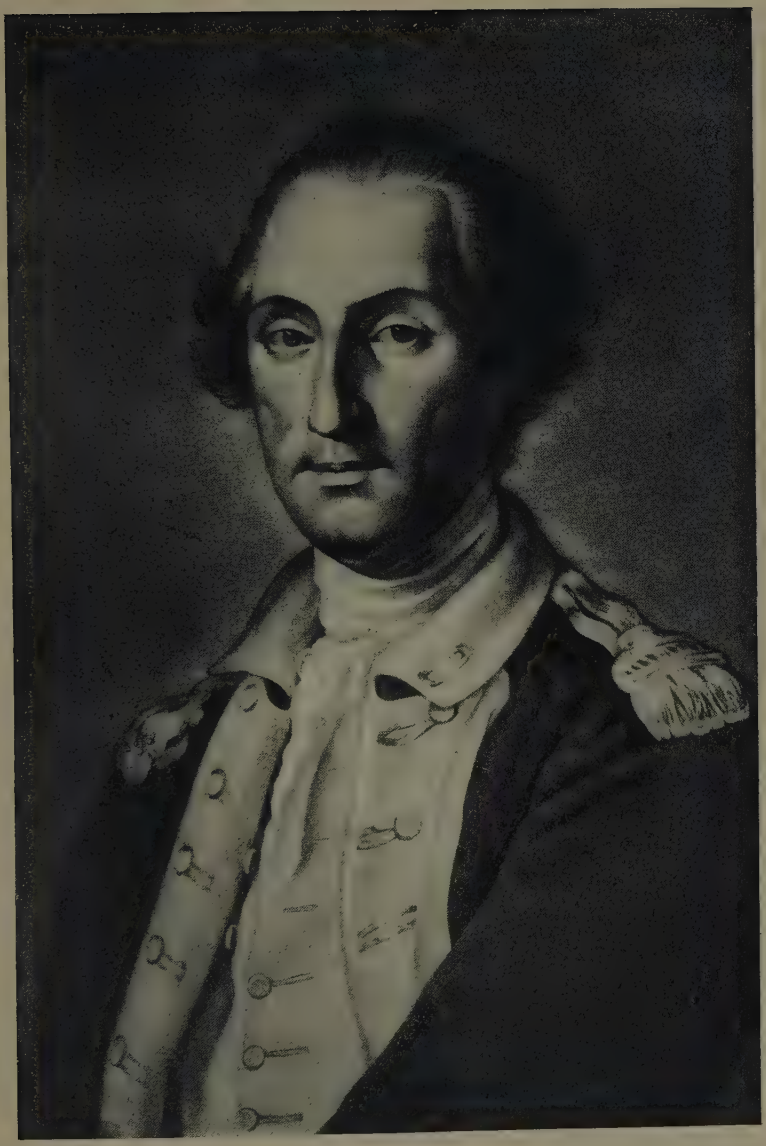
It was then decided that the officers of the land forces should go ashore in a boat with the despatches. Finally, M. de La Touche and M. de Vallongue resolved to go up the river as far as possible and when they could

go no farther, to cast anchor and make the enemy pay dearly for their lives and frigates.

The discussion was still going on, when we suddenly perceived the English squadron in full sail and its frigates approaching us fairly rapidly. We at once weighed anchor and moved up the river. Half an hour later, I saw Baron de Vioménil, Marquis de Laval, Duc de Lauzun, Comte Bozon de Talleyrand, M. de Chabannes, M. de Fleury, M. de Melfort and four soldiers climb out of the *Aigle* and embark in a small boat. I followed their example and entered a boat with M. de Broglie, M. de Lameth, M. de Montesquieu, M. de Vaudreuil, M. de Loménie and our other passengers. Within an hour we were across the river, and set foot on the right bank, feeling little joy in being on dry land, as we were anxious about our frigates, which were being more and more pressed between the impassable sandbanks and the pursuing English.

Moreover we had other difficulties. We were on dry land, it was true, but we were without baggage, and domestics, and even without other shirts than those we had on. Furthermore we had landed in an unfamiliar country, which we knew to be inhabited by a great number of people who were attached to the English cause, and were called Tories. The land before us showed nothing but thick woods and dangerous marshes. We had no horses. And owing to the pursuit of the English and our difficult navigation among rocks, we had neither eaten nor slept for twenty-four hours. Nevertheless, exhausted as we were, we lost no time in setting out, following the first path we saw.

After wandering about in the forest for a while, we came across some fences, and arrived at the house of an American named Mr. Mandlaw.



WASHINGTON

Engraved after the Portrait by J. Trumbull, 1780

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Baron de Vioménil and other passengers of the *Aigle* soon joined us. Our host informed us that we were in a little county of the state of Maryland.

Our first care was to send provisions and the boats back to our frigates. M. de Vioménil wrote a message to M. de La Touche, begging him to send him by night the money destined to the army, and assuring him that we would take every care to send boats to them so that in the event of disaster they might save part of their crews and goods.

MM. de Vioménil, de Laval, de Lauzun and four soldiers waited at Mr. Mandlaw's house for the Commanders' reply in order to be ready to receive the two million five hundred pounds when that great sum arrived.

MM. de Loménie, de Chabannes, de Melfort, de Talleyrand and de Fleury were sent to different points to get information along the coast and to get a supply of oxen and carts.

MM. de Lameth, de Broglie and myself with some other passengers from the *Gloire* went with a negro to secure some boats in a little river that flowed into the Delaware, and which was said to be three miles from our landing place.

Our guide made us walk very fast across at least eight miles of forest and marsh, and it was not until two hours later that we came to the tavern of an American called M. Pedikies, a little way off the river.

He received us very coldly and showed little trust in us. Not until after he had received a lot of promises and some money, together with some notes drawn on the commandants of our frigates, was he persuaded to urge the owners of the boats to comply with our request.

They went off with our money, and started down the river. But the sight of the English frigates frightened them, and they were either unwilling or unable to carry out their promise.

After so much hard work, a piece of roast beef and a bowl of rum and a bad bed seemed to me like the delights of Mahomet's paradise. Nevertheless, both delights and sleep were short. We were kept awake by anxiety, and very early we dispersed in order to look for horses on which to return to our general. The more anxious we appeared to find mounts, the more the owners affected cold, untrusting faces in order to make us pay more dearly.

Prince de Broglie was the first to succeed. He set out and lost his way *en route*. Half an hour later I managed to buy a horse and set out likewise, lost my way and came to the bank of the Delaware in a very marshy spot, my horse sinking in up to the girth.

I don't know how I should have fared if I hadn't met a young American horseman, who consented to act as my guide. He told me that a body of English troops had just landed. I was therefore very anxious about the general and his companions.

My horse was very sturdy, and I thought I would be able, with his help, to find out the truth of the news, trusting to my spurs for escape if the report turned out to be true, and I came across a squad of red-coats.

So my guide and I went back into the wood and took the direction of Mr. Mandlaw's house.

Three miles on, hearing the sound of footsteps and arms, we hid behind some thick bushes to find out what the cause was. Presently we saw Baron de

Vioménil on foot with his aides-de-camp and four soldiers. They were walking behind a cart laden with the chests of gold which had been disembarked from our frigates. I went up to him at once. He told me that he had gone to the river at day-break and waited for the boat with the money, but at the same time he had discovered another boat full of guns and red-coats who had rushed to prevent their landing.

Having sent two soldiers to keep watch on them at closer quarters, he had succeeded in landing the two tons of gold on the cart.

Our boat had fired a few swivel guns, which had frightened and stopped the enemy, but two other English boats full of armed men had suddenly sprung up, and advanced to attack our boat. The latter was obliged to throw the rest of the money overboard and to make for safety.

Having loaded the money on a cart, he had set out for the town of Dover, where Lauzun, Laval and the others were to join him by different paths. Lauzun had set out first in order to be at Dover, and to send him all the means of escort he could secure.

I followed the general to within a short distance of Dover, and went back to find my companions in order to tell them what the general had done, and to warn them of the landing of English soldiers.

A short while after, we were all together again, and our cavalcade took the route for Dover.

Soon we overtook the cart that contained our precious gold. The general, however, was no longer with it. One of the aides-de-camp told me that Baron de Vioménil had been informed by two officers from the *Aigle* that the enemy boats had disappeared, and that it would be

possible at low tide to recover our abandoned tons of gold. He had returned at full speed with Laval to the river, leaving the others and ourselves the order to escort our gold to Dover.

We arrived at that little town about three o'clock in the afternoon. Lauzun had already sent out some carts, and was assembling some soldiery which Montesquieu was told to lead to the general.

At midnight M. de Vioménil joined us with his carts. In spite of heat and fatigue he had succeeded in fishing up the lost gold. Thus we recovered our treasure, and, though we were as naked as worms, without baggage and valets, we should have considered ourselves the happiest people on earth but for the deplorable situation and extreme danger of our frigates.

Next morning we vaguely learnt that two of our ships were out of danger, but that the *Aigle* had been obliged to surrender after an hour's fight with the enemy's frigates, whose cannon shots we had heard all night.

The general requested me to convey the news at once to M. de la Luzerne, in the town of Philadelphia, and to hand him the Court's despatches. I took also my father's despatches to M. de Rochambeau, but M. de Vioménil told me to keep them, and to wait with them at Philadelphia till he sent me the other letters for the army.

Before carrying out this order, I was at last allowed to sleep for two or three hours. It was very necessary after so many hardships and fastings, shipwreck and long errands. Just as I was falling asleep, my eyes chanced upon the scapular round my neck and I recalled rather disdainfully the false prediction of sweet Dona Marianna-

Isabella del Carmo, not forgetting, in my reproaches, the venerable abbess with her crozier.

I set out very early next morning for Philadelphia. I was unable to have a look at Dover except as I passed through. It was the first American town I set eyes on. I was struck with its aspect. It was surrounded by a thick forest, because, as in the other parts of the thirteen states, the population was still scattered over a vast territory, only a small part of which was under cultivation.

All the houses of Dover were simply but gracefully shaped. They were built of wood, and painted in various colours. The variety of the buildings, the cleanliness within them, the brilliantly polished brass knockers on the doors, spoke of the order, activity, intelligence and prosperity of its inhabitants.

To the eye accustomed to the sight of our magnificent cities, the affectation of our young exquisites, and the contrast between our luxurious upper classes and the coarse dress of our peasants and the rags of our innumerable poor, it is no small matter of surprise on arriving in the United States to find neither an excess of show nor an excess of misery.

All the Americans we met wore well-cut clothes of good material and well-polished boots. Their bearing was free, frank and kind, as remote from rude coarseness as from affected politeness. It showed us the independent man, obedient to the laws, proud of his rights, and respecting those of other people. Their aspect told you that you were in the land of reason, order and freedom.

The route I followed was very broad, well marked out and kept. In all the places I stopped at, the inhabitants received me obligingly, and hastened to get horses for me and my guide.

As everybody was interested in public affairs, I had to answer a host of questions concerning the cannon shots which had resounded in the neighbourhood of the Delaware, and concerning our landing and the strength of the enemy that had pursued us. All these questions were mingled with offers of glasses of Madeira wine.

Continuing my way through what looked like the avenue of a garden shaded by the finest and oldest trees in the world, I did not go a mile without meeting a dwelling-house already of long-standing and some new clearing. Before arriving at Christianbridge, forty miles distant from Dover, I passed through several populous settlements. Christianbridge stands on a height, at the bottom of which flows a small river that joins the Delaware.

Entering a very neat tavern I had been told of, I had great difficulty in waking up the landlord as it was late in the night. He told me that he could not put me up, as his house was occupied by some Frenchmen.

Unable to believe that I had been outstripped by any of my companions in shipwreck, I went straight to the Frenchmen's room. I woke them up and was surprised and delighted to find the Marquis de Champcenetz, aide-de-camp to M. de Vioménil.

When we left our frigates, that officer had yielded to M. de La Touche's entreaties to stay aboard the *Aigle*. M. de Champcenetz spoke English perfectly, and his help was very necessary to M. de La Touche to understand the American pilots during that dangerous navigation.

He told me all the particulars of the disaster to the *Aigle*. On the evening of the 14th, while our frigates were well up the river and being pursued by only three

enemy frigates, the ground suddenly became shallow. This was a sign that we were nearing the insurmountable sandbank mentioned by the pilots.

M. de La Touche wanted to stand at bay, but the sloop we had captured easily cleared the sandbank that blocked the channel. The captain thereupon gave the order for the *Gloire* to attempt the passage. It managed to do so successfully after a number of efforts. This gave M. de La Touche some hope of saving his ship; but as it was of greater draught than the *Gloire*, it struck the rock more violently, stuck in the sand and his frigate foundered in such a way as to deprive him of all chance of using his cannon, which could only shoot up into the air.

Whereupon an English frigate, that was in the good channel, took up its position behind the poop of the *Aigle* and bombarded it lustily. Other frigates came up by the channel amid-stream. M. de La Touche was unable to reply to their terrible fire except with two useless little poop cannon, and he merely fired them off for the honour of his flag.

When the English frigates came near, he cut his masts and made a big hole in the ship, which would have sunk if there had been water enough. After that sad operation, during which the enemy's fire increased, he told M. de Champcenetz to jump into the only remaining boat with the American pilots and some sailors. As soon as the boat got clear off, the *Aigle* struck her colours.

Seeing the rowing boat, the English frigate turned its fire upon it. The frightened pilots wanted to surrender, but M. de Champcenetz drew his sword and forced them to brave the hailing bullets and cross the river. Finally, after a thousand dangers, he got to land, and went to the little town, where I found him.

He told me of another misfortune of M. de La Touche. Just before his surrender, he tried to parley with the English, and learnt from them that the merchant vessel with his mistress aboard which he had towed as far as the Azores, had arrived the same day as ourselves in Delaware Bay, where the English had captured it. M. de Champcenetz wished to accompany me to Philadelphia, and I gladly accepted his company. At the end of three hours we were out of the places in which the loyal Americans were to be feared, and we arrived at Wilmington, the capital of the Delaware county, a well-built, clean and populous town, whose numerous shops bespoke the briskness of its trade. I lodged with an American colonel, who received us courteously and got very fine horses for us.

From there we left for Chester, where we arrived in time for dinner at an inn called the General Washington; for in all the towns of that grateful republic the name of Washington was everywhere. Our hostess was very friendly to the French, and increased her care and interest when she learnt that I was the uncle and friend of M. de La Fayette.

Chester is very rich and prosperous. Its situation on the Delaware gives it a delightful view. The elegance of its houses shows that it is near a capital. All the vessels navigating the Delaware stop at the port of Chester before going on to Philadelphia.

On nearing Philadelphia, I crossed the Chester bridge, and admired the magnificent landscape around it, as well as the graceful swans and the various vistas down the course of the river. A few moments later, I met M. de la Luzerne. That minister had been recently informed of the arrival of our frigates in the Delaware, and was on his way to Dover to find M. de Vioménil.

AT THE TRIANON UNDER MARIE-ANTOINETTE
(*from "Voyage de Laborde,"* 1782)

To face p. 141

He received me very cordially, expressed his regret for our hardships, was deeply grieved at the disaster which had overtaken the *Aigle*, and laughed a little at my sorry outfit, which was indeed rather funny. He made me take a seat in his carriage, and we set off together along the road to Philadelphia.

CHAPTER XI

Washington

ONE of my greatest wishes was to see the American hero, General Washington. Comte de Rochambeau kindly presented me to him. Too often reality is far below the imagination, and admiration grows less when one has a close view of its object. But when I saw General Washington, I found that the impression made upon me by his aspect was in complete harmony with what I had imagined it to be.

His outward appearance seemed to tell his history. There was simplicity, grandeur, dignity, calm, kindness, firmness in his face and bearing, for they were the marks of his character. He was tall and dignified. The expression of his features was gentle and kind. His smile was pleasant, his manners were without familiarity.

He did not make the grand show of a general of our European monarchies. Everything about him revealed the hero of a republic. He inspired rather than commanded respect, and the eyes of all those about him showed genuine affection and utmost trust towards a leader on whom they seemed to ground all their safety. His quarters were situated a short distance from his camp, and was the picture of the order which reigned in his life, morals and conduct.

I had expected to find the camp full of disorderly soldiers, ill-instructed officers and republicans with none of the urbanity so common in our old civilised countries. I remembered that when the rebellion first started, labourers and artisans who had never touched a gun ran pell-mell to fight the British regiments. To the latter they appeared like uncouth rustics wearing no military tokens except a bonnet with the word "Freedom."

I was therefore very much surprised to find a well-disciplined army, which was the picture of order, reason, instruction and experience. The generals and officers displayed a noble bearing, tone and natural kindness, which I have always thought as preferable to polished manners as a kind face is to a mask that one has tried to render gracious.

This individual dignity and pride in freedom and equality were no small obstacles to the leader who was to raise himself above them without arousing jealousy, and to subject them to discipline without exciting displeasure.

Any other man but Washington would have failed. To appreciate his genius and wisdom it is enough to say that he commanded the army of a free people for seven years in the midst of stormy revolution without causing his country any fear or arousing the distrust of Congress.

On all occasions he gained the support of rich and poor, magistrates and fighting men. He is perhaps the only man that led and ended a civil war without incurring a single deserved reproach. As everybody knew that he cared only for the public good, he enjoyed during his lifetime the unanimous homage which contemporaries usually deny to their great men, and entrust

to posterity. His exalted position in public opinion seems to have discouraged and disarmed envy, since she had no hope of her barbs ever reaching him.

General Washington was about forty-nine years old at the time I saw him. He modestly tried to avoid the honours which people were pleased to shower upon him. Yet nobody knew better than he how to accept and respond to them. He listened attentively to all who spoke to him, and his face answered them before he uttered a word.

He bore arms for the first time when very young, at the head of the Virginian militiamen on the Canadian frontier against France. On his return home he remained inactive for a long time, apparently preferring a philosophic peacefulness to the agitations of public affairs.

Free from ambition, he took little part in the events leading up to the American insurrection. But once war was irrevocably declared, and the State and army needed a head, every eye was turned upon Washington, whose wisdom was universally esteemed. Moreover, in a country that had enjoyed peace so long, he was perhaps the only man who had any idea or remembrance of warfare.

Out of sheer love for his country he refused the salary assigned to him as commander-in-chief, and it was almost in spite of him that the State undertook to pay the expenses of his table. It was laid every day for thirty persons. In accordance with English and American custom, these meals lasted several hours and ended with toasts. The most in use were those addressed to the independence of the United States, to the King and Queen of France and the success of the Allied armies. After these came the sentimental toasts.

COMTE L.-PH. DE SÉGUR
AT THE AGE OF 35
By Mme. Vigée-Le Brun

To face p. 145

Almost always, after the table was cleared and only bottles and cheese remained, the gathering would go on into the night. Temperance, however, was one of Washington's virtues. His only aim in prolonging his dinner was to give himself up to the charms of conversation, which took his mind off his cares, and rested him from his fatigues.

General Washington received me kindly. He spoke to me of his country's gratitude to the King of France for his generous assistance. He spoke in terms of highest praise of the sagacity and cleverness of General de Rochambeau, whose friendship he considered it an honour to have merited and obtained. He praised the bravery and discipline of our army, and finally he said very kind things about my father's long service and numerous wounds which he called fitting decorations for a Minister of War.

The King's choice of Comte de Rochambeau to command the French Army was a great piece of luck for the new republic; for it was impossible to find a wiser, cleverer, firmer, more experienced and popular man.

He seemed to be particularly cut out to agree with Washington, and to serve with republicans. A friend of law and order and liberty, he obliged us more by his example than authority to respect the rights, customs and manners of our allies. Thus during all the long stay of our army in America and throughout several campaigns, discipline was so well maintained there was not a single dispute or blow exchanged between French and Americans.

M. de Rochambeau, together with M. de Chastellux and a part of his staff, took leave of us after handing over the command of the army to Baron de Viomenil,

who ordered us to raise the camp at Providence, where we were on the first of December, and to set out for Boston.

The extreme cold made marching very difficult for us. Before entering the town of Boston our troops smarted themselves up so finely in the open country that one could hardly credit them with having marched several hundred leagues. A great part of the population came out to meet us. Ladies at the windows clapped their hands as we passed. Our stay was the occasion for continual feasting.

Europe cannot offer to our admiration more beautiful, elegant, well-bred and talented women than the ladies of Boston. I lodged at the far end of the town in a pretty house belonging to Captain Philipps. M. de Vaudreuil's fleet was composed of three vessels of eighty cannon, seven of seventy-four, and two frigates of thirty-two. I embarked on board the *Souverain*.

On the 24th of December we set sail. It was with heart bowed down that I left the shores of America.

CHAPTER XII

St. Domingo

WITH a fair wind behind us, we soon entered another climate. Whereas we had recently felt the chill of the icy zone beneath our furs we were now in the zone of great heat. The sudden contrast made the heat almost unbearable. A few weeks later we sighted the shores of the island of Porto Rico. Long before we caught sight of them the air had been perfumed by their orange and lemon trees.

At Porto Cabello I found letters from France. My father informed me that the King had appointed me colonel-in-command of the regiment of Belzunce dragoons, which took the name of Ségur thereafter. The news would have given me much pleasure at any other time, but on the eve of an expedition to conquer Jamaica I could not bear the thought of quitting the army, so I decided to stay on.

The imminent gathering of so many forces in a vast combination against the English possessions in the Antilles was no doubt one of the chief causes which led the British Cabinet to make peace and recognise the independence of America.

A few days after our return to Porto Cabello, the frigate *Andromaque* brought us the news from France that peace had been signed. Shortly after we set sail

for Cap Français, in the island of St. Domingo. M. de Vaudreuil desired me to accompany him on board the flagship *Northumberland.*

We left on the 3rd of April, 1783.

When we were beyond Curaçao, I mentioned to M. de Vaudreuil that I felt sorry we were on the northern side of St. Domingo, as it gave me no chance of seeing my "plantation," which was situated in the western part of the island, near Port-au-Prince. He very kindly put the frigate *Amazone* at my disposal. I immediately set off in it with M. Berthier, who was known later as Prince de Neufchâtel.

Presently we entered the port of Jacquemel. We both bought horses and journeyed night and day till we reached Léogane. Thence we went to Port-au-Prince, where I only stayed one day, taking a look round that beautiful city, one of the richest in the New World.

The port was full of ships, trade being very brisk. The luxuriousness of the place would be hard to describe. Those were the first splendid days of that rich colony or rather, of that kingdom, which gave France an annual gain of sixty millions in the balance of its trade.

I was far from foreseeing, while admiring that flourishing town, that in a few years' time it was to be the grave of several thousands of Frenchmen and the capital of a republic of negroes.

I was invited to dine a little way out of Port-au-Prince at the estate of M. Blanchard, the uncle of a commissioner of war of M. de Rochambeau's army, who had followed me on that journey. There I met the steward of my estate, M. Seigneuret, who was not a little surprised to find his landlord sitting next to him, whereas he thought he was in France.

FREDERICK II REVIEWING TROOPS
By Daniel Chlodowiecki

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His carriage and horses, that is to say, my own, took me in less than a couple of hours to my estate, situated in the middle of the Cul-de-Sac plain at a place called La Croix des Bouquets.

A domestic had dashed ahead to announce my arrival. So when I entered my plantation, I was surrounded by a crowd of black figures, about five hundred negroes, negresses, negrolings, mulattoes, mulatresses, quadroons and quadroonesses, octeroons and octeroonesses. These poor people sank on their knees before me, and with great shouts expressed their astonishment and joy at the sight of their master. For these poor, oppressed, degraded and suffering creatures somewhat resembled in this respect the subjects of the absolute monarchies of Asia. They do not say " If the King " but " If the Master knew," hoping that their evils, which come from below, may find a remedy higher up.

I was fated to see the most varied scenes and the most contrasting pictures during my two short campaigns.

In the Azores I saw both the ruins of Atlantis and the traces of the Middle Ages, the monkish ignorance, chivalrous manners and religious gallantry of the thirteenth century. In the United States I saw republican reason, simplicity, courage, activity and virtues. In the torrid zone I saw the Spanish colonies with all the wealth of a marvellous Nature and all the miseries of an ignorant, greedy, wanton and intolerant administration.

Finally, at St. Domingo everything showed the wise efforts of a protecting Government, and an active, intelligent people. Nevertheless, in my great house I felt like a pasha in his harem, surrounded by slaves who only awaited a nod from me to obey all my whims, and whose life or death, happiness or misery, depended on an act of my will.

I still shudder when I recall the fact that, two days before my arrival, an old negress had been thrown alive into a fiery furnace. She had indeed had the wickedness to poison several children. Nevertheless she had perished without any trial.

There were two striking contrasts noticeable in St. Domingo. On the one hand the island was carefully cultivated throughout and looked like a magnificent garden with well-kept roads and numerous paths hedged with lemon and orange trees. Around the sugar-cane fields and cattle pastures were the charming houses of the wealthy owners of the plantations. The roads were full of vehicles carrying their wares to the ports, while a crowd of light carriages conveyed the voluptuous colonists from plantation to plantation.

They all visited one another, and gathered together continually. It was a ceaseless round of feasting, dancing, concerts and games. At the latter great fortunes were often dissipated in a few hours.

Such was the picture presented to my gaze by the white population. But as soon as I came out of the whirl of that seductive world and returned to the fields of my plantation, what a sad and different sight spread before me! I saw my unhappy, naked negroes, with nothing on but a pair of drawers, scorched unceasingly by a blazing sun in a heat of from ninety-five to a hundred degrees, bending from morn to night over the hard earth, forced to dig without resting, roused, if they dared to stop working for one moment, by the whip of the taskmasters, who pitilessly cut their skin, and envying almost the lot of the bullocks and horses, whose only toil was to carry the gathered canes to the mill.

Having thoroughly informed myself of the condition and work of my plantation, I made a number of rules

in order to soften my slaves' hard lot. I lengthened their leisure hours, increased the extent of the land which they were allowed to cultivate on their own account, and ordered the taskmasters to use moderation in punishing. They all blessed me for it, and it is still a pleasant remembrance for me.

M. Berthier gave me four pretty pictures representing the different scenes and works of my plantation, my reception by the negroes, their games and dances. They are all that remain to me to-day of that rich possession. At last, having been warned by M. de Vaudreuil that he was about to leave for France, I returned at once to the Cap, journeying comfortably from plantation to plantation.

The greatest hospitality was shown me at each of them in accordance with custom. Everywhere I found agreeable conversation, comfortable lodgings, excellent food, carriages and slaves at my disposal.

I was pleased to notice that many of the colonists deserved praise for their humane conduct.

I will enter into no particulars concerning the town of Cap. Few of our great cities equal it in prosperity and magnificence.

Our squadron set sail on the 30th of April, 1783. We encountered no difficulty in crossing except a calm or two off the Azores. At the end of forty-nine days we were near the coast of France.

CHAPTER XIII

Back in France

ON SEEING my own country again and entering the carriage that was to bring me back in a few days to all that I loved, I was filled with a wonderful delight. I gloried in the sight of the fields, trees and verdure, in the purity of the air and the freshness of the food.

The postillions (well paid) seemed to fly, but my impatience made me think they were merely walking. At last I arrived at Versailles where, with a ravishment one feels but does not express, I was back in the arms of a beloved father and dear family, from whom a month ago I had been separated by an immense abyss.

A few hours after my arrival the Queen very kindly sent word that I was to go and see her at the house of the Duchesse de Polignac, with whom she was dining. She said very kind things to me when I saw her. She spoke of the successes of our forces on land and sea and of the advantages of a glorious peace for France with the pride and sentiment of a queen, and of a French queen at that.

A few days later, Comte de Vergennes had a long conversation with me concerning the inner conditions of the United States and of the public spirit of that country. His insight into the future destiny of that

new republic, and its influence on other countries, was clear, wise and profound. Events have since proved and continue to prove it.

M. de Vergennes was a man of instruction, clever, wise in his policy, modest in his exterior, simple in his speech. But where is the wisdom that can avoid all temptation and all the rocks that abound in high places, in the midst of that eternal nest of intrigues, the Court?

M. de Vergennes' clever policy had enjoyed a great success. The wisdom of his measures had brought about the pacification of Russia and Turkey, Prussia and Austria, and had thus forestalled a continental war in which we would have been involved.

Having found the means to outwit the efforts of the British Cabinet, a powerful league was formed under our guidance on behalf of the United States. On the other hand England was without allies, and thrown upon her own forces. At last an honourable peace set the crown on our glorious labours.

The affronts of the peace of 1763 were wiped out. The whole of France was delighted to see the English Commissioner withdrawn from Dunkirk, where his presence had been very humiliating for us. The American independence opened new outlets for our agriculture and trade. Everything seemed to assure us of increasing prosperity.

M. de Fleury lost his place as Finance Minister, which was given to M. d'Ormesson. The latter was more to be esteemed for his probity than for his talents.

His ministry was a short one. With the best intentions he made mistakes. He had to be given a successor. M. Foulon aspired to the post, but M. de Calonne got it before him, being backed up by a big party at the Court and by M. de Vergennes.

M. de Calonne's ministry may be held to be one of the causes of a revolution which, though inevitable, might at least have been warded off. The appointment of that ambitious, light-minded minister, and the levity with which he was dismissed, certainly hastened the explosion which the old institutions had long been preparing.

M. de Calonne was a combination of all that was likely to please the Court, displease the people, feed authority with illusions, and rouse the fears of the *parlements*. His manner and bearing were more like those of a man of the world than a magistrate. One admired his fine wit, pliant nature, lively imagination, and facile eloquence. Perceiving everything rapidly and going deep into nothing, he allowed no obstacle to disturb his presumptuous confidence.

Rightly counting on the immensity of the resources of France, though with little prudence and ability, he abused rather than used it. He was not in the least disturbed by the perplexities due to an expensive war, the prodigalities of the Court, the rareness of the coinage and the absence of credit. Instead of initiating a strict economy, he saw no danger in increasing expenses, raising the power of the Court by augmenting its outward show, impressing the public with luxurious grandeur, recalling confidence by means of illusions, and getting loans adopted without opposition by bankers, new taxes by the *parlements*, and sacrifices of money by the nobility and clergy.

M. Necker's severity had grieved and frightened people. The mediocrity of his successors discouraged them. The audacity and cheerfulness of M. de Calonne reassured them.

His first measures to get money were successful.

Courtiers, financiers and magistrates had never known a minister so ready to receive, listen and reply to them. If princes had any debts, he paid them. If women begged for favours, he granted or promised them. As he had his work ready and well laid out, he always seemed at leisure. Business never kept him from society, and his study might have been taken for a drawing-room.

Baron de Talleyrand said to M. de La Fayette one day: "I was willing to admit that the welfare of the State was that man's work; but I would never have believed he could do it so quickly."

It must seem very surprising that a statesman like M. de Vergennes, whose cautiousness, experience, and almost bourgeois simplicity of manners and speech contrasted so strongly with M. de Calonne's levity, daring, vivacity and elegant ways, should have been led astray like anyone else, and shared the presumptuous confidence of the new Finance Minister.

However that may be, the money reappeared, the complaints ceased, general felicitations and universal joy took the place of sinister predictions and cries of distress. On my return I found the Court and Paris society more brilliant than ever.

We were not satisfied with having wiped out our affronts, conferred independence on America and regained our rank and preponderance in Europe. Proud of our age, its philosophy and discoveries, we thought we would walk in the steps of Montgolfier, Charles and Robert, and conquer the empire of the sky, while Mesmer's magic wand inspired us with the hope of finding a universal remedy for all the evils of mankind.

Indeed, when I recall that epoch of deceptive dreams and learned follies, I compare it to the state of a person

at the top of a high tower, whose giddiness, due to the sight of the immense horizon, is soon followed by a terrible fall.

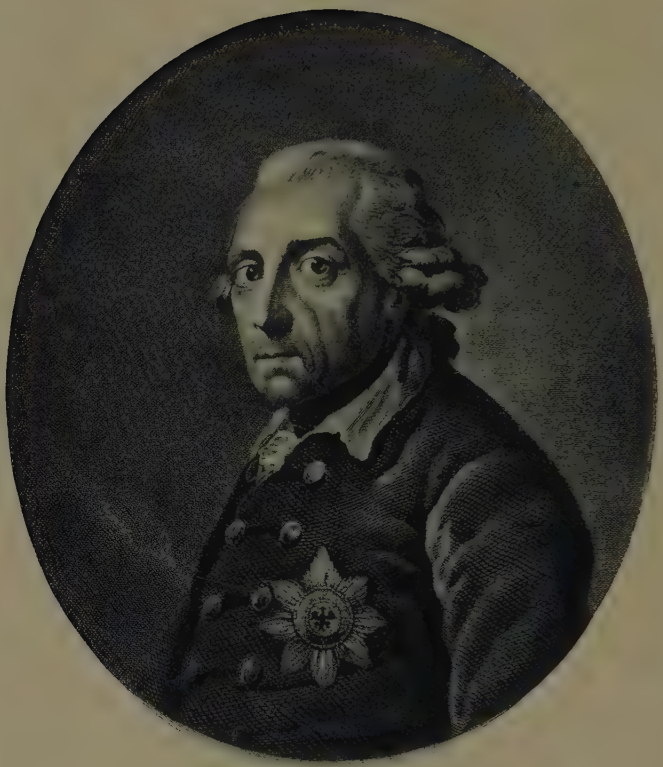
On the other hand there was a very real and astonishing activity in agriculture, industry, commerce and navigation, rapid progress in our literature and philosophy, and a great advance in our knowledge of physics, mechanics and chemistry, in a word, in all that contributes to the civilisation of a nation.

We were very proud of being French, and still more of being eighteenth century French, for we regarded that century as the golden age restored to earth by the new philosophy.

It struck me very much to find that in spite of our presumptuous self-confidence and pride, and after fighting the English on land and sea and depriving them of thirteen rich provinces, English fashions were more than ever the vogue in Paris.

We also began to have clubs. Men went there, not for the sake of discussion, but to dine, play whist and read all the new publications. This innovation had very sinister consequences later on. Its first result was to separate the men from the women, and that brought about a notable change in our manners. They became less frivolous, but less urbane, stronger but less pleasant. Politics gained thereby, and society suffered.

Everything seemed to take on a serious turn. Conversation turned less on promotions, intrigues and good fortunes. The Queen herself had made a great change in the fashions. As she preferred society to mere exhibition, her fashions became simple and elegant. Often people went to Court in a black dress instead of dressing grandly. "Have you lost anyone?" one was



FREDERICK II
By J. F. Bausse

To face p. 157

asked. "Oh no!" was the reply. "I'm in black but not in mourning."

Marie Antoinette was the first queen of France to admit men to her table. Etiquette relaxed its severity at the same time as the morality of the world became stricter. And while all classes drew together and mixed with one another, there grew up a new kind of distinction between vice and virtue, knowledge and ignorance, talent and lack of talent.

That original wit, Beaumarchais, introduced political satire into our theatre. He attacked with a fool's bauble what philosophy fought with a club. The performance of his *Marriage of Figaro* is a notable moment in the prologue of our revolution, and courtiers, who of all people should most have feared its effects, dragged permission from the King to go and see themselves mimicked.

It was then that a simple manufacturer, Montgolfier, inspired us with the bold hope of reaching the stars. That man, who was the first to make vellum paper in France, brought an immortal reputation to Annonay, his native place, and to the name of his family by his invention of the balloon.

The town of Annonay was twice fortunate in that century, for it was also the birth-place of Boissy d'Anglas, the great citizen, who shone with so much virtue in a period of crime, so much dauntlessness in the days of terror, so much moral sense in his policy, loyalty in his parliamentary speeches, gracefulness in his poems and constancy in friendship at a time when the latter was as fickle as Fortune.

Every great discovery owes half to chance and half to genius. One day, in 1783, Montgolfier was at his paper factory boiling water in a coffee pot covered by

a spherical piece of paper. The paper swelled up and rose into the air. The philosopher was astonished, and repeated the experience. He set to thinking, and calculated the effect of air rarefied lighter than the atmosphere. The balloon was invented, and the empire of the skies became a new career for man's daring.

Vapour was the first means used to rarefy air. Hence its glory was treated at first like smoke. Soon, however, gas was used, and a basket attached to the balloon gave us the spectacle of mortals rising in the air.

Nowadays the sight is so common that it arouses no curiosity. Like fireworks it is a vulgar adornment of our fêtes. Nevertheless I shall never forget the great impression I felt at the sight of Charles and Robert's first ascent from the Tuileries gardens.

Disquieted by that daring attempt, kind-hearted Louis XVI had at first tried to stop it. Just as all eyes were fixed on the two men about to brave tremendous dangers in the sky, a ministerial order arrived forbidding them to start; but the courage of the aeronautists and the impatience of the immense crowd, gathered to enjoy that flight of genius, bore down all prohibition. The rope was cut, the airy globe rose majestically and we saw the air-navigators take the route to heaven.

In other times, people would have thought that gods had appeared, and I myself felt ready to believe all sorts of wonders.

After that triumph of genius over Nature, every spectator felt he had grown bigger. All bounds seemed to have disappeared before the ambitious pride of the human mind.

People spoke of the steering of balloons as though already discovered, and saw scores of air-fleets sailing across the sky, while a descent upon England seemed

as easy as a game. Certain pretty women began to express their fear of being carried off from the midst of our gardens by barbarous balloonists. Smugglers began to rejoice, and customs-officers feared the loss of their position.

But the most genuine hope of all was that of using balloons in war to fly over fortresses, a hope that has failed to this day.

Nevertheless, balloons were used at the battle of Fleurus, and even then it was not thought possible to use them except to observe and discover the enemy's forces and movements. The savants consider it impossible to steer a balloon against the currents of air. But what does one know?

On my return to France I took less part in the active and brilliant life of Paris. My father kept me at Versailles, shackled to his ministerial office, where I was obliged to do hard daily work.

I remember how I spoke very sharply to my father on the cold reception he was said to give to the majority of those who came to him with schemes, and I broke into the usual commonplaces of liberal thought on the difficulty of getting truth to reach the palaces of kings and the studies of their ministers.

My father smiled, and said nothing in reply. Next day he sent me word to get from his offices all the memorials and schemes addressed to him on reforms and new systems of tactics or administration. At first I was very pleased, but I soon realised that it was far from being a pleasure, and was in fact a useful lesson and severe punishment.

Indeed, it would be impossible to give any idea of the host of platitudes, nonsense and disheartening follies contained in the piles of documents I was requested to

analyse. Plucking up courage, I appeared to set about my job with proper pride. With a triumphant air, I availed myself of five or six useful memorials drawn up by men of learning and understanding, but I found out that my father knew them already, for he frequently had converse with clever men who were likely to enlighten him. So, conquered in my last redoubt, I begged for mercy, and was relieved of my burden. To make up for it, I was given more important and secret work.

Like all the colonels who had served in the American War, I received the authorisation to wear the medal of the American Association of Cincinnatus, which General Washington sent to us.

It consisted of a gold eagle attached to a blue ribbon edged with white. On one side Cincinnatus was shown leaving his rustic hearth to take up his blunderbus as dictator; on the other side he was portrayed as laying down his sword and buckle and taking up his plough.

A decoration of this kind, so new and so republican, could not sparkle in the very capital of a great monarchy without making people think a lot. But nobody gave it a thought. However obvious may have been the impression produced by the sight of that emblem of liberty, we cared for nothing but the pleasure of showing it off on our breast as a war trophy, and of drawing upon ourselves the gaze of a host of idle people who are always attracted by the slightest novelty.

In their eyes the decoration appeared to be merely a new order of knighthood. Confusing democratic institutions with aristocratic distinctions, that emblem of equality and liberty was commonly called an Order both in town and at the Court, so that it was rather ridiculously called the Order of Cincinnatus.

THE CAKE
(PARTITIONING OF POLAND)
By Erimelin

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An amusing thing happened when a colonel, whose education had been somewhat neglected in spite of his distinguished birth, said to me when I was appointed Commander of St. Lazare and Knight of St. Louis: "Well, friend, you are now pretty rich in saints. You've got three of them, St. Louis, St. Lazare and St. Cincinnatus. As to the last saint, I'm damned if I know where our American friends have dug him up!" And note that he himself had been in America, and had just received the decoration.

I spent the few days of leisure which my father left me in going once more among the numerous circles in Paris, which offered such different enjoyments to the mind. However, I felt very disheartened one day at the French Academy. Lemierre was reciting some fragments of his tragedy *Barnewelt*. The language of that poet was so harsh that I felt like a traveller jolted about in a bad coach, and I was afraid of seeing our language become Celtic and barbarous again.

Lemierre was not without talent. His works contained interesting situations, a fair amount of lyrical fire and noble thoughts. But never was any man less fortunate in consonants. They met and clashed in his verses so weirdly that one almost wondered at times whether one was listening to the French language.

I made up for the poems of Lemierre by listening to our French Virgil, the Abbé Delille, who abounded in masterpieces and put so much soul, grace and harmony into all his works.

Like Homer, he was blind. He never allowed his unpublished poems to be read. He used to recite them himself, though fearing lest they should be committed to memory and copied out, for some plagiary's benefit. One day his friend, Baronne Dubourg, a very nice

woman, wanted to tease him by writing down his verses as he was reading them. She took a very fine raven's quill for the purpose and set to work. Everything seemed to favour her plan till the poet heard the scratching of the pen. He stopped short and cried out:

> Et tandis que je lis mes chefs-d'œuvre divers,
> Le courbeau devient pie et me vole mes vers!*

I never saw anything so brilliant as the royal journeys to Fontainebleau in 1783 and 1784. Then in all the glory of her youth, the Queen was surrounded by the friends of her choice. She was the recipient of sincere homage from a host of distinguished foreigners as well as Frenchmen. She was looked upon as the most beautiful ornament of the fêtes that embellished her Court. She encouraged letters, protected the arts, did good on all sides, and offended no one. She was acquainted as yet only with the flowers of her crown, and did not foresee how soon she was to feel its terrible weight.

Calumnies had not yet begun. She heard only the voice of respect and love. At most she might have heard the grumbling tones of one or two old courtiers, who were jealous of her friends, and grieved for the boredom of by-gone days, and its rigorous etiquette, the weakening of which seemed to them a sign of national decadence.

Comte d'Artois, who had just returned from his first campaign at Gibraltar, was fond of the world, society, shows, hunting and fêtes. He was the life and soul of the court, a real prince of youth. *Monsieur* was less active by nature and cultivated a happy memory, confining his pleasures to those to be found in conversation in

*And while I'm reading my various master-pieces,
The raven turns magpie and steals my lines.

the midst of a little separate court, where politics sought and found more room than elsewhere.

Good King Louis XVI was simple in his tastes and disinclined to noisy pleasures, though finding amusement in those he gave to others. He seemed satisfied with the results of a war he had been anxious to avoid, and with the success of an ambition which had been ours rather than his. He rejoiced inwardly in the good he had planned and wished to do on behalf of his people.

CHAPTER XIV

Appointed Ambassador

ON MY return to Paris I was informed by my father that a new career lay before me. M. de Vergennes had urged him to get me to enter diplomacy. He had destined me from the outset to occupy one of the most important posts, that of Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary of the King to the Court of Russia.

At first I was less satisfied than surprised by the proposal. I would have to quit the sword for the pen, philosophy for politics, straightforwardness for cunning, pleasure for business, and work conscientiously for the maintenance of peace, whereas I yearned for war, the very natural desire of a young colonel.

Wishing to get enlightened on matters that would affect my career, I paid visits to a statesman of great talent and long experience. He was the celebrated Comte d'Aranda, Spanish Ambassador to France. He had acquired a great reputation for the firmness, secrecy and swiftness with which, in the face of all the old prejudices and intrigues, he had closed all the convents of the Jesuits in Spain, and thereby completed the unforeseen destruction of that powerful order.

Comte d'Aranda bore the stamp of originality in his face, bearing, language and manners. His temper

BIELINSKI PALACE, WARSAW

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was grave, his gravity ironical and almost satirical. He had an odd habit of saying after every phrase: "You understand? You comprehend?"

I begged him to renew his kindness to me, telling him how anxious I was regarding my new career and how grateful I would be if he consented to give me his advice, so that I might gather some of the fruits of his long experience.

"Ah!" he said to me with a smile. "You are scared by the amount of study that diplomacy demands? You understand? You comprehend? You think you've got to wither a long while over maps, diplomas, and old books? You wish me to give you some lessons in politics? Very well, I consent. We'll start whenever you wish. You understand? You comprehend? Here now, come and see me to-morrow noon and I promise you that you will pretty soon know all about the politics of Europe. You understand? You comprehend?"

I thanked him and returned the next day. I found him seated in an armchair at a great desk, on which a map of Europe was spread out.

"Sit down," he said to me, "and let's begin. The aim of politics is, as you know, to find out the strength, means, interests, rights, fears and hopes of the different Powers in order that we may be on our guard against them, and able when necessary to conciliate them, disunite them, fight them, or unite with them, as our own advantage or safety demands. You understand?"

"Splendidly!" I replied. "But that's what seems to me to require so much study and presents so many difficulties."

"By no means," he said. "You are mistaken. In a few minutes you will have mastered everything. Look at this map. Here you see all the states of Europe,

big and small, no matter their extent, their limits. Look at it well. You will see that none of these states appears to be well rounded off, a perfect circle. You see there are a lot of juttings-out, breaches, cuttings-out. You understand? You comprehend?

"Look at that Colossus of Russia. In the south, the Crimea is a peninsula that juts out into the Black Sea and belongs to the Turks. Moldavia and Wallachia are salients with shores on the Black Sea that would suit fairly well the Muscovite design, especially if one draws a line to the north and adds Poland. Now look at the north. There's Finland bristling with rocks. It belongs to Sweden and yet it is nearer to St. Petersburg. You understand?"

"Let's go on to Sweden. You see Norway? It's a large strip of land holding on naturally to Swedish territory. And yet it is a dependency of Denmark. You comprehend?

"Let's go to Prussia. Notice how long, frail and narrow it is. What a lot of gaps have got to be filled up before it can be extended towards Saxony, Silesia and the banks of the Rhine! You understand? And Austria, what shall we say about it? She possesses the Netherlands which are separated from her by Germany, while she is quite near Bavaria which doesn't belong to her. You understand? You comprehend? You find Austria again in the middle of Italy, but how far that is from the cadre that is due to her! How Venice and Piedmont would round it off so well.

"Well, I think I've told you enough for this time. You understand? You comprehend? You realise that all these Powers wish to keep their juttings-out, fill up their buttings-in and round themselves off according to opportunity. Well, my dear, one lesson is enough,

for that's the whole of politics. You understand? You comprehend?"

"Ah!" I replied. "I understand and comprehend all the more as I look at Spain and notice that on its west side is a long, nice strip of land, or butting-in, called Portugal, which I believe would fit in perfectly with the Spanish cadre."

"I see you understand? You comprehend?" Comte d'Aranda replied. "Now you are as wise as we are in diplomacy. Adieu, go gaily and boldly and you will prosper. You understand? You comprehend?"

Thus ended that brief, weird course of political science.

In December, 1784, having received abundant instructions from M. de Vergennes, M. de Castries and my father, and proof of the King and Queen's kindness, I regretfully took leave of my dragoons and bade good-bye to my family.

I set out for Russia, accompanied by Mme de Ségur, who went as far as Forbach. There I left her and arrived a few hours later at the Court of the Duke of Deux-Ponts.

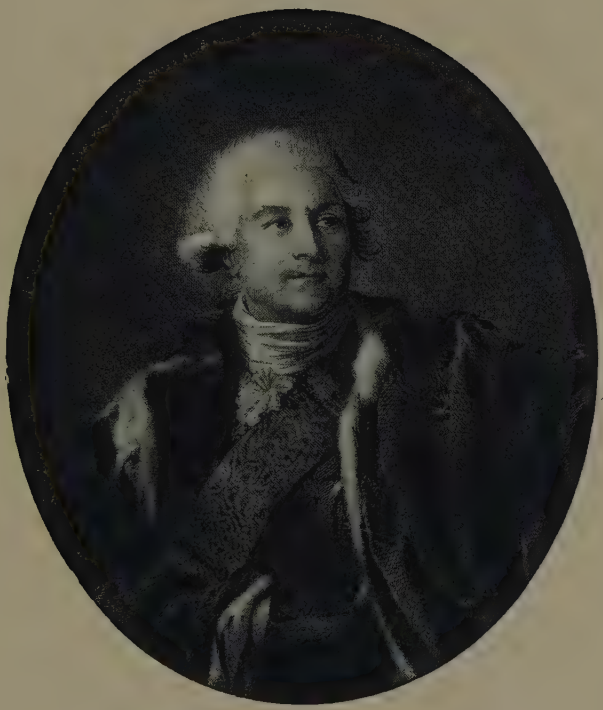
CHAPTER XV

Frederick II

AT BERLIN I was presented by Comte d'Esterno, our minister, to all the princes of the royal family and the King's ministers, Count Finck, Count von Hardenberg and Count Schulemburg. The latter told me that the King was at Potsdam, and I would have to write to him direct to ask for the favour of a special audience. I did so at once, being very anxious to see that celebrated monarch.

Herr von Goltz, his aide-de-camp, wrote to me that His Majesty would receive me at seven o'clock in the morning next day. I was not at all surprised, as men of that kidney are the enemies of repose, and have short nights and long days.

Though one's knowledge of the world may be slight and one's habit of mind far from lofty, it is possible to speak to a King without any embarrassment; but a great man can never be approached without a certain amount of awe. Moreover, Frederick was in private rather erratic, fairly capricious, subject to prejudice, often given to jeering, sometimes epigrammatically, against the French, very attractive to the traveller he wished to favour, spitefully wounding to the one he was prejudiced against, or to those who unwittingly chose the wrong moment to approach him.



STANISLAS-AUGUSTUS, KING OF POLAND
Painted by Mme Vigée-Le Brun (1797)

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Fortunately for me the circumstances were favourable. He was in a temper against Russia. That country's alliance with Austria caused him much uneasiness. Our success in the War of Independence and our support of the Dutch against the ambitions of Joseph II had given him the hope of renewing his old relations with France, and of separating us little by little from Austria, whose union with us had almost brought about his ruin. Hence he was disposed to treat the French well.

This fact, no doubt, was the reason for the long audience he granted me, showing during its course all the graciousness and, I might say, coquetry of mind which he knew better than anyone how to use when he deigned to wish to please.

Also nobody knew better than he how to flatter and torment, fondle and nettle in turn the self-conceit of his neighbour. Voltaire had experienced both.

His character was so well known that Walpole had no difficulty in mystifying Jean Jacques Rousseau by sending him a forged letter of Frederick, ending with the words: "If the advantages I propose to you are not sufficient, and if your imagination is in need of notable misfortunes, I am king and I will see that you do not lack them."

At the beginning of the Seven Years' War, an ambassador of England, whose wit and conversation pleased him, went to inform him that the Duc de Richelieu, with a French army, had taken possession of the island on Minorca and Fort St. Philippe.

"The news, Sire," he said to him, "is sad but not discouraging. We are hurrying up new forces, and everything gives ground for hope that with God's help we shall make up for that setback with a prompt success."

"God?" replied Frederick in a tone of sarcasm mixed with temper, "I had no idea He was among your allies."

"At any rate," replied the ambassador, nettled, and wishing to allude to the King's subsidies from England, "he's the only one that doesn't cost anything."

"So you see He's paying you out," the malicious monarch retorted.

Sometimes he found pleasure in disconcerting the person speaking to him by putting an outraging question to him; but he was not at all annoyed if he got a smart retort.

One day, seeing his doctor come in, he said to him: "Let's be frank, doctor. How many men have you killed during your lifetime?"

"Sire," replied the doctor, "about three hundred thousand less than Your Majesty."

One day as he was about to enter an assembly on a gala day, he was informed that two ladies were quarreling at the door in a noisy, scandalous manner over precedence.

"Tell them," said the King, "that the lady whose husband occupies the higher office has the right to go first."

"They know," answered the chamberlain, "but their husbands both have the same rank."

"Very well then! The precedence is for the one that has longer service."

"But they were both promoted at the same time."

"Then tell them from my part," replied the monarch impatiently, "that the sillier of the two women shall go first."

He was indifferent to lampoons and malicious or seditious talk.

One day at Potsdam he heard from his study a great noise in the street. He called an officer and told him to find out the reason.

The officer came back and said that a very disparaging placard on His Majesty had been stuck on the wall and placed so high that a great crowd were struggling with one another to read it. "But the guard will disperse them presently," he added.

"Do nothing of the sort," replied the King. "Put the placard a little lower so that all can read it at ease."

The order was obeyed. Shortly after, the talk was no more about the placard but the monarch's wit.

If that enlightened prince despised the clamours of the ignorant crowd, he desired to have the approbation of men of talent, and even looked upon them as the dispensers of fame. His ambition courted them. He reckoned their genius as a power and flattered it.

"I am like Prometheus in the fable," he wrote to Voltaire. "I sometimes steal a little of your divine fire in order to animate my weak productions. But the difference between the fable and truth is that the soul of Voltaire, being greater and more magnanimous than that of the king of the gods, does not condemn me to the torment which the author of the heavenly theft underwent."

Though the poet-philosopher upbraided Frederick for his love of war, he replied pleasantly to the royal writer's homage:

> Chaque esprit a son caractère:
> Je conçois qu'on ait du plaisir

A savoir comme vous saisir
L'art de tuer et l'art de plaire.*

Nobody rewarded great services better; yet nobody made more constant fun of the vanity of persons who owed their high rank to birth or favour.

Though liberal-minded in his writings, Frederick was arbitrary in his behaviour.

He had written when young *The Anti-Machiavellian*, and yet the first act of his reign was a Machiavellian political act. A war declared without motive, a rapid invasion of Silesia, and five victorious battles revealed to Europe both a man of ambition and hero.

When his allies were no longer useful to him, he abandoned them. Shortly afterwards, he invaded Bohemia. Vienna believed he was at its gates. Nevertheless he was betrayed by fortune, that capricious Fate which rules everything, and which he called so philosophically His Majesty Chance. But his genius knew how to repair his reverses with brilliant triumphs leading to a glorious peace.

At last, France, Russia and Austria plotted his downfall. It was a war of giants. He saw the Russians march into his capital. Pressed and pursued by three formidable foes, he turned on them, beat them one after another, and dictated peace to the proud potentates who, in their certainty of his downfall, had already shared out his States.

He was more than liberal-minded with the *Encyclopédistes* and irreligious to excess with Voltaire. He protected the Jesuits in a Protestant country, and was magnanimous towards men of talent, though jealous

* Each spirit has its own character:
I imagine that it must be pleasant
To be able like you to grasp
The art of killing and the art of pleasing.

ST. PETERSBURG

VIEW OF THE MARBLE PALACE ERECTED BY CATHARINE II

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of them. He reigned as a despot, and yet tempered his power with justice.

His soldiers loved him in spite of his severity, for to him they owed their glory. His people forgave him the heaviness of the taxes he imposed on them, because he lived without show, and used his revenues to extend his territory, favour the progress of industry and alleviate hardworking poverty.

The general welfare was his guide. The law he made became his master. Everybody knows the anecdote of the miller of Sans-Souci.

It is not hard to imagine the emotion of a young beginner in the political career at an audience with so imposing and famous a monarch. Moreover I was aware that notwithstanding his partiality for Frenchmen he shared the false opinion, spread on all sides by our rivals, concerning our supposed fickleness. Thus he was fond of telling the story of one of our compatriots, the witty Marquis d'Argens, who enjoyed his intimacy. One day during one of the dinners at which the King allowed full familiarity for the sake of freedom in the conversation, Frederick asked his guests what each of them would do if he had his place. Some said they would make such and such conquests. Others said they would make certain reforms, set up certain institutions.

"And you, Marquis d'Angens?" said the King.

"Me, Sire?" answered the Marquis. "My faith! I'd sell my kingdom and buy a good estate in France and live in Paris on the income."

"Well now!" Frederick replied. "If that isn't a very French remark!"

On my arrival at Potsdam next day at the appointed hour, I might have thought it was not a great monarch

I was going to see but a simple colonel. There was only one soldier standing on sentry at his door. After going through a corridor I came into a large hall where Herr von Goltz, the King's aide-de-camp, was sitting by the fire.

He rose and told me he would go and tell the King I was there. I asked him if I had to observe any particular etiquette at the presentation.

"Etiquette?" he said with a smile. "Ah! we know nothing about that word here. If the King wishes to receive you like most foreigners he will come out of his study, which you see over there, and will speak to you here. If he thinks that he ought to receive you as a minister in his study, he will call both of us. Then, if he intends treating you with particular distinction, you will remain alone with him."

Having made these few remarks, he entered the King's study and came out almost at once to talk to me.

A quarter of an hour later, I saw the door open slightly, and the King beckoned to us to enter. We had hardly crossed the threshold, when he told Herr von Goltz to retire. Thus I found myself, much to my embarrassment, closeted with that great man.

I thanked His Majesty for his kindness in granting me so prompt an audience, and satisfying my impatient desire to pay my respects to a monarch whose genius was esteemed by the whole of Europe, and whose friendship was very precious to the King, my master.

After telling me that he sincerely desired to retain and even strengthen the bonds of friendship between Louis XVI and himself, Frederick asked me to give him detailed news of the King and Queen and their family.

He said to me:

"I have always been fond of France, the French character, language, arts and literature, and it gives me pleasure to see you here. I have known your father by repute for a long time. He is a good man, and a brave soldier, who has won his marshal's mace by his actions and wounds. I see you are wearing the medal of Cincinnatus. You went to war in America. Your young people are always war thirsty. But since 1763 you must have forgotten about war. Such a long period of peace is soul-destroying. How were you able to forget the delights of Paris so far away and in a country that is hardly civilised? How could you do without your luxury, balls, perfumes and powder?"

Rather nettled by his somewhat uncivil remarks, I interrupted him, and, taking up the word *powder*, pretended to understand it in another sense. I said to him: "Sire, we unfortunately did not have the opportunity to fire as much of it as we would have liked. After three short campaigns the English shut themselves up in their fortresses and, by submitting to peace, deprived us of the pleasure somewhat too soon."

"Ah!" the King replied with a smile. "I told you so. Nobody does more justice to your nation's love of war than I do. No people of the earth is more brilliant. It succeeds in everything it wants to do. But you know that it has always been accused of being light-minded and fickle. It is as unsteady as its imagination."

"Sire," I replied, "none are exempt from imperfections, not even the greatest men. If Your Majesty allows me to say so, had we not more than once to complain of your inconstancy, when we were your allies? Glory alone has found you always faithful."

As my retort had been provoked by his sarcasms, it did not displease him. On the contrary, he laughed,

and his blue eyes, which could be mischievous, penetrating or severe in turn, suddenly took on a singular expression of gentleness and benevolence.

I eagerly examined that figure of a man, great in genius, small in stature, bent beneath the weight of his laurels and long labours. His blue dress, much worn like his body, his top-boots reaching to above his knees, his jacket covered with snuff, all made up a strange yet impressive *ensemble*. The fire in his eyes showed that he had not grown old in spirit. In spite of his invalid bearing, one felt he could still fight like a young soldier. Notwithstanding his small stature, he seemed to stand higher in mind than all the rest of mankind.

"Do you know that your young King's reign has begun well?" he asked me. "He has deceived my fears and surpassed my hopes. I was afraid the son of the Dauphin would let himself be governed by the priests, by some Cardinal like Fleury, and that the Welches (so Voltaire called you) would be crushed by their wretched discipline. But he dared to take a Protestant minister, whom I hoped he would keep a long time. He followed M. de Malesherbes' wise counsel of tolerance. He took advantage of the errors of the English to deprive them of thirteen provinces. He has recently protected Holland, and raised a dyke against the schemes of Austria. The latter is not fickle, and her constancy in her views may yet give us a lot to keep us occupied."

He asked me about our literature, spoke intelligently of the chief works, referred rather badly to the Abbé Raynal, though he had received him with favour, questioned me as to my opinion on the matter, and seemed rather pleased when I approved of the principles expressed in the book and blamed the invectives that marred it.

THE FONTANKA

NEAR THE IMPERIAL GARDEN, ST. PETERSBURG

By Meno Haas

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"These philosophers have done a lot of good," the King went on. "They have rescued us from barbarism. They have almost annihilated the stupidity of prejudices and the shameful folly of superstition. But they don't know men well, and wrongly imagine that one can govern as easily as one writes. They do not realise that a philosophically-minded ruler is forced to be a politician by duty and a warrior by necessity. Their everlasting peace is a dream, like perfection itself. Their chief is dead. It is a great loss. It will be a long time before there is anyone to replace Voltaire in any part of the world."

"I am delighted, Sire, to hear you restore to the shade of that immortal writer the favour he may have deserved to forfeit," I replied.

"Yes, I had reason to complain of him," the King declared. "But we were reconciled. I have forgotten his wrongs, and I only remember the pleasure and good his writings procured for me. You will see his great admirer in Russia. She rewarded his rather flattering tributes to her, and his sarcasms against the Turks with gentle wheedlings. She has not treated me so well, and a visit from the Emperor Joseph II has deprived me of her friendship. However, I ought not to be surprised at that. Women are as whimsical as Fortune, and besides, faithfulness has never been her particular boast. It is not for that virtue that she is famous."

Seeing him in such a good humour, I ventured to pass a few remarks on the ambition of the Empress who had loved, raised, crowned, subjugated and despoiled the King of Poland. I soon realised that I was rather lacking in tact. Frederick had his own reasons for saying very little about the position of Stanislas and the dismemberment of his kingdom. But he returned to

the subject of the Empress, and being very caustic against persons who were out of his favour, he told me some very pithy anecdotes concerning the health, Court and favourites of the Empress Catherine.

I told him I was very anxious to make the acquaintance of so famous a princess, whose genius could not be denied, since, in spite of being a woman and foreigner, she had succeeded in reigning peacefully over a storm-breeding Court, won the affection of an immense, half-benighted population, stifled several conspiracies without cruelty, triumphed over the Ottomans, burnt their fleet near the Bosphorus, and got the greatest sovereigns of Europe to court her alliance.

"It is a pity that so brilliant a reign should have begun with such a tragic calamity," I added.

"Ah!" the King replied. "Though we are at present almost at loggerheads on that point, I must do her justice. People are mistaken on that subject. Neither the honour nor the crime of that revolution can justly be imputed to the Empress. She was young, weak, isolated, a foreigner, on the point of being repudiated and imprisoned. The Orloffs did everything. The Princess Dashkoff was merely the fly on the wheel. Rulhière, the secretary of Baron de Breteuil, who took her in his embassy to Russia, in 1760, was mistaken. Catherine was still unable to do anything. She threw herself into the arms of those who were willing to save her. Their conspiracy was mad, and badly planned. Peter III's lack of courage was his ruin, notwithstanding brave Munich's advice. He allowed himself to be dethroned like a child that is put to bed."

In dismissing me, the King said: "Adieu, Monsieur de Ségur. I am very pleased to make your acquaintance.

When you return to France after your mission, if I am still alive, come back to Berlin and stay here a longer while. I will see you again with real pleasure."

This long audience led to my being received with still greater kindness by all the great personages of Berlin, where I remained a number of days.

CHAPTER XVI

In Poland

HAVING received the packet which the King said he would entrust to me, I took leave of the royal family and set out for Warsaw. On entering Poland, one feels as though Europe has been left behind and a new spectacle strikes one's gaze. Before one, stretches an immense country almost entirely covered with ever-green pine forests, looking eternally sad, broken at long intervals by cultivated plains like islands scattered on the ocean. The population is poor and enslaved. The villages are filthy. The cottages are little better than savages' huts. Everything gives one the impression of having slipped back ten centuries.

Nevertheless, in the heart of these cold, dreary spaces are several great towns of wealth and large population, near which are seen the castles of a polished, proud, free, chivalrous and war-like nobility.

In that country the feudal ages come to life again. Received with ancient and generous hospitality, the traveller finds within those vast halls courteous knights, and graceful women whose lofty soul and romantic character mingle an heroic something with their charms.

All is contrast in that country: deserts and palaces, peasant slavery, and turbulent freedom of the nobles,

COMTE L.-PH. DE SÉGUR IN A SLEDGE-RACE AT ST. PETERSBURG, 1786

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who have long composed the real Polish nation, a great wealth of corn and little money, and hardly any trade except what is done by a busy swarm of greedy Jews, whom Prince Potemkin wittily called " The Navigation of Poland."

In almost all the castles there is the luxury due to a badly administered great fortune, tottering under the weight of extortionate debts; a great number of servants and horses and hardly any furniture; oriental luxuriousness and none of the comforts of life; a sumptuous table offered to all travellers and no bed in the apartments except those of the master and mistress; a life spent almost entirely in travelling about, though with the sad necessity of taking everything with one, for there are no inns on the great roads except in the towns; a constant passion for war and hatred of discipline, a continual, well-founded fear of surrounding hostile powers, no care and no sacrifices to guard the frontiers by erecting fortresses. The arts, wit, gracefulness, and literature, all the charms of social life are equal in Warsaw to those of Vienna, London and Paris, but in the provinces the manners are still Sarmatian. In a word, there is an inconceivable mixture of ancient and modern, monarchist and republican spirit, feudal pride and equality, poverty and riches, wise speeches in the Diets and drawn swords to settle the discussion, ardent patriotism and appeals too often made by faction to foreign influence.

Such is Poland, and such were my reflections when I emerged from the solitude of a vast forest of pine and cypress where you might have thought you were at the end of the world, and Warsaw burst upon my sight with all the splendour of the capital of a kingdom.

The day after my arrival, I was presented to the King at a private audience by Count Stackelberg, the Russian Ambassador. The reception given me by the King was no less remarkable than pleasant. "Ah! Monsieur de Ségur," he said to me, as soon as he saw me, "I can assure you that I have the greatest pleasure in seeing you *again*."

I was so much astonished at these words that I wondered whether I had heard aright; and as my face and silence betrayed my surprise, the King repeated: "Yes, I see you *again* with real pleasure."

"But, Sire," I replied, "Your Majesty must find my astonishment very natural. The person that ever had the good fortune to see you could surely not have forgotten it, and it is quite certain that I have never until this day appeared before Your Majesty's eyes."

"You err," Stanislas replied, smiling. "And I might even accuse you of ingratitude; for the first time I saw you, I embraced you very cordially, as I do at present."

Whereupon he did me the honour of putting his cheek against mine.

"Sire," I rejoined, "I confess that Your Majesty's jest is no doubt very kind, but as long as you will not deign to enlighten me it will remain a riddle to me."

"Listen," he said. "You are aware that I have not always been King of Poland. Thirty years ago my name was Poniatowski. I have travelled a lot, and stayed a fairly long while in France. Your father and the Marquise, his wife, were accustomed to receive me at their house. Shortly before my departure from Paris, I went to say good-bye to your father and found his door closed. I insisted on its being opened to me.

I was answered that your mother had been brought to bed that morning and that M. de Ségur was attending her. I said that that was one more reason why I should see her and offer her my congratulations. I went in. Your father led me into the study where you had been carried and I kissed the new-born child. So you see you are an old acquaintance of mine. At the same time it is quite natural that the acquaintanceship should have left no trace in your memory, for we have both changed a little since that time."

After questioning me kindly about my family and those he remembered, he sent me away. But I afterwards saw him almost every day in small company, either at the palace or at Mme de Cracow, his sister's; also at Mme von Nassau's, where he came to spend the evening several times. He skimmed over everything, never going very deeply into any matter, either in order not to embarrass his interlocutors or not to embarrass himself, but above all, for the sake of being pleasant. To please was his constant aim and chief merit. The first partition of Poland took place in 1773. Hence, when I arrived in Warsaw, the King was reigning over a dismembered country and humiliated nation, or rather, it was Catherine of Russia who reigned. Her ambassador, Count Stackelberg, though less haughty than his predecessor, Prince Repnin, disdained to cover his almightiness with a modest veil. Stanislas had nothing but the ornament of a King; he obeyed the orders dictated to him by his imperious protectress, while the Ambassador's Court was more brilliant and numerous than his own.

Independence was lost, and the yoke was too heavy for any amount of courage to remove. All the brave Poles showed in their faces the deep indignation that

stirred their hearts. Whatever their rank, they could not bear to hear the name of a Russian spoken without blushing with shame and trembling with rage, while their blood boiled in their veins.

. . . . .

Snow was piled up in the villages as high as the tops of the doors, so that only the roofs of the houses were visible, and they looked from afar like tents scattered about the plain. We could hardly get our horses to make a few paces from time to time, and had great difficulty in getting them out of the holes into which they frequently fell. We had to stop at one village and leave my three carriages there. I bought some peasants' sledges and, with the help of money, persuaded a Russian courier, who happened to be passing, to let me have his kibitka. Notwithstanding the lightness of the sledges, I reached Bialystok with great difficulty, as the snow was not firm. I did my best to make myself comfortable at a bad inn, where, in accordance with Polish custom, everything was there for the traveller except the most necessary for food and sleep. But I had hardly been more than a quarter of an hour in that sorry place, when a Polish officer entered my room and told me that the Countess of Cracow, to whose service he was attached, had ordered him to invite me to put up at her castle, where she had had everything prepared for my reception.

Never did a pleasanter invitation turn up more seasonably.

I followed my guide to the residence, which was truly worthy of a King's sister. It was a vast, noble castle, completely and sumptuously furnished. My suite were also lodged there. And to my great surprise I found that the countess had very kindly sent a majordomo,

CATHERINE II

Silhouette made in Germany

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cooks, valets and a great number of domestics who came to take my orders.

I also received a letter from her in which she placed her castle at my disposal, begging me to stay there as long as I liked and to entertain any travellers who might chance to stop there.

So there I was, transformed into a Polish magnate, and certainly no knight errant ever found a nobler lodging and more courteous reception in his adventures. Only the lady of the place was lacking, and I could not help regretting her absence.

It went on snowing all the time, so I stayed several days at Bialystok, where several Polish gentlemen and a few ladies took refuge, being held up like me by that icy plague.

Warned of their arrival by the Countess's majordomo, I carried out her hospitable wishes. I invited them to come to the castle, doing them the honours of host as best I could. Thus for a whole week, instead of being a prisoner in the little smoky inn, I lived like a grand magnate, keeping good table with pleasant and polite company and spending my evenings in talking, playing, performing music or dancing.

At last a north wind rose. The snow hardened, sledging became possible and the time came for me to depart.

Nothing remarkable happened to me on the way to Riga, a strong, populous commercial town, which is more like a German or Swedish town than anything Muscovite. I stayed there only a few hours, and dashed swiftly over the two hundred leagues between there and St. Petersburg.

CHAPTER XVII

Catherine II

I ARRIVED on the 10th of March, 1785, in the house which M. de la Colinière had hired for me. I lost no time in taking the necessary steps with him in order to hasten the moment when I should meet that extraordinary woman, the celebrated Catherine, whom Prince de Ligne called *Catherine the Great.*

The daughter of the Prince of Anhalt-Zerbst, she had borne in her infancy the names of Sophia-Augusta-Dorothea von Anhalt. She took the name of Catherine on entering the Orthodox Catholic faith, when she married her cousin, Charles Frederick, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, whom the Empress Elizabeth had chosen for her heir and appointed Grand Duke of Russia.

The genius of Catherine was vast, her mind was subtle. She displayed an astonishing mixture of qualities rarely found together. Though of too pleasure-loving a disposition, she was a close worker; open-hearted in her private life she dissembled in politics; her ambition knew no bounds, but she knew how to give it wise direction. Constant in her friendships though not in her passions, she had set herself fixed principles in administration and policy; not once did she ever forsake a friend or a project.

Majestic in public, good, even familiar in society, she retained a certain cheerfulness in her gravity and dignity in her mirth. Though endowed with a lofty soul, she showed a middling imagination. Her conversation even appeared dull, apart from the very rare occasions when she let herself go concerning history or politics. Her genius would then give brilliance to her speech. She was an impressive queen and a pleasant individual.

The majesty of her brow and the carriage of her head, as well as the arrogance of her look and the dignity of her bearing, seemed to lend height to her stature which was not naturally tall. She had an aquiline nose, shapely mouth, blue eyes and black eye-lashes, a very gentle look when she wished, and an attractive smile.

In order to disguise the obesity brought by age, she wore an ample robe with broad sleeves similar to the ancient Muscovite costume. The whiteness and bloom of her complexion were the charms of beauty she kept longest.

Too weak in other directions, she had at least the virtue of sobriety, and some travellers have made a gross blunder in asserting that she was a strong wine-drinker. They were unaware that the red liquor which filled her glass was merely red-currant water.

This princess never took supper. She rose at six o'clock in the morning and lit her own fire. She worked first with her lieutenant of police and then with her ministers.

Rarely were more than eight guests seen at her table, which was served like that of any ordinary person. As at the dinners of Frederick, etiquette was proscribed and freedom allowed.

A philosopher by opinion, she was religious by policy. No one was ever able, like her, to pass with

incredible facility from pleasure to business. The former never carried her away beyond her will or interests; the latter never absorbed her to the point of making her less agreeable. She herself dictated her more important despatches to her ministers, who were in reality only her secretaries, while her council was enlightened and directed by herself.

A young foreigner, suddenly transplanted into an empire whose language, laws and manners she had to study all at the same time, Catherine had seen the golden dawn of her destiny surrounded by the darkest clouds. She was married to a prince who did not love her, but was jealous of her superiority. She was dependent on an Empress, whose indolent, voluptuous and mistrustful nature offered her more rocks of danger than protection. The prospect before her was that of captivity, exile, or death, for nature had given her too much spirit, talent and pride to put up with quiet obscurity in disgrace.

The great were charmed by her attractive disposition, the people, finding her gentle, kind and devoted to the practices of religion, loved and revered her. All the clergy thought they would reign by her influence. The magnificence of her gifts secured for her the devotion of the military, on whom she showered encouraging praises and benefits. Hence, when her weak and weird husband wished to repudiate and shut her up in order that he might give his hand and crown to Countess Woronzoff, it was he who found himself dethroned.

The Empress sent him to a house in the country, and there, after meditating six days on their sinister project and fearing the slowness of the poison they had given him, the conspirators strangled him.

SEMENOFF BRIDGE, ST. PETERSBURG

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The new Empress was not slow in proving to her subjects that she was above all fear; which was the safest way of removing all danger. Her administration was calm and gentle, as though she had been born to the throne and taken up a peaceful heritage.

My début just missed being untoward. In accordance with custom, I had given the vice-chancellor a copy of the speech I was going to make. While I was waiting in an ante-chamber at the Imperial Palace before being presented, Count von Cobentzel, the Austrian ambassador, came to see me.

I was so taken up by his lively conversation that when I was informed the Empress was about to receive me, I realised I had utterly forgotten the speech I was going to make to her.

I was trying in vain to bring it to mind as I passed through the apartments, when of a sudden the door leading to the Empress's room was thrown open. She was standing in rich attire, her hand resting on a pillar. Her majestic air, dignified bearing, proud gaze and rather theatrical pose filled me with a surprise that made an end to all my memory.

Happily, instead of vainly trying to recover it, I suddenly made up my mind to invent a speech on the spot, though it might not contain a couple of words even of the one that had been communicated to the Empress, and for which she had prepared her reply.

A slight surprise showed itself in her features; which, however, did not hinder her from replying with affability and graciousness, even adding a few kind words concerning myself.

After receiving my credentials, and handing them to the vice-chancellor, she put me various questions on the French Court and my journey to Berlin and Warsaw.

She spoke also of M. Grimm and his letters, probably in order to let me perceive what a favourable impression they had produced on her regarding the new French minister appointed to her Court.

When, later on, I was admitted to her intimate circle, she reminded me of that audience. "What happened to you, Monsieur le Comte," she said to me, "the first time I saw you, and what whim made you suddenly alter your speech? It was a surprise to me, and forced me to alter my reply as well."

I confessed to her that I had been for the moment disturbed in the presence of so much glory and majesty.

"But, Your Majesty," I added, "I immediately realised that such embarrassment might be a very simple matter for an individual, but was by no means suitable for a representative of the King of France. It was that which made me decide not to torment my memory, but to express in the first words that came my Sovereign's sentiments for Your Majesty, as well as those with which your fame and person inspired me."

"You did rightly," she replied. "Everybody has his faults. I am very subject to preconceived judgments. I remember one of your predecessors being so put out the day he was presented that he could only utter the words: 'The King, my master . . ., I waited for the rest; he said once more: 'The King, my master . . .' and got no further. At last I came to his aid, and told him that I had long known the King, his master's friendship for me. Everybody assured me that he was a man of wit, but his shyness left me always with an unjust prejudice against him which I blame myself for, rather tardily, as you see."

The same day, I was presented to the Grand Duke Paul Petrovich, the Grand Duchess, and their son, the

Grand Duke Alexander, who afterwards became Emperor, and has just died after a glorious reign. It was the first time, at the age of seven, that he received an ambassador and listened to his speech. I have always found it a very ridiculous usage to address solemn words to an infant; so I merely said a few words to him about his education and the hopes placed upon it.

One of our famous governors once did something better; I believe it was M. de Malesherbes. Being charged at the head of a Sovereign Court to harangue a Dauphin in the cradle, who could only cry and weep to express his desires and griefs, he merely said to him: " Monseigneur, may your royal highness, for the welfare of France and your own, be always as deaf and insensible to flattery as you are now to the discourse I have the honour to pronounce before you."

CHAPTER XVIII

Russia

ST. PETERSBURG astonishes the visitor in two ways: he sees there side by side the age of barbarism and that of civilisation, the tenth and eighteenth centuries, the manners of Asia and Europe, coarse Scythians and polished Europeans, a brilliant, proud nobility and a people steeped in serfdom.

On the one hand there are elegant fashions, gorgeous dresses, sumptuous repasts, splendid fêtes and theatres equal to those that adorn the exquisite society of Paris and London; on the other hand there are merchants in Asiatic costume, coachmen, domestics and peasants dressed in sheep-skins and wearing long beards, fur-bonnets, long skin gloves without fingers and hatchets hanging from their leather belts.

When you enter their houses in the country, you recognise the simplicity of old rustic ways of living. There is the boorish dwelling made of logs piled one on top of the other, a little wicket for a window. A large stove fills the narrow room, that contains no furniture but a few wooden benches.

Conspicuous is the picture of a saint, weirdly and coarsely painted or sculptured in the centre of a large metal frame. To this image one must bow before greeting the master of the dwelling.

MOSCOW

THE KREMLIN FROM THE KAMENNY BRIDGE

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Groats and some roast meat are their usual dishes. Kvass, or flour fermented in water with pepper-mint, is their beverage. Unfortunately they too often add to it great bumpers of vodka, which a European palate is unable to bear.

When the merchants of the towns get rich they make a great show of luxury at their table without taste or measure. They place before you fearful piles of meat, fowl, fish, eggs and pastries heaped up without order, all thrust upon the guests against their will or appetite, and likely, by their enormous quantity, to frighten the most intrepid stomachs.

Since almost all the serfs of that vast empire are devoid of the ambition which goads and animates everything, and have no desire to raise themselves and get rich in order to increase their enjoyments, nothing is more monotonous than their life, more simple than their ways of life, more limited than their needs, more constant than their habits.

Their morrow is always the same as their to-day. Nothing ever changes. Even their women, with their oriental dress and the rouge on their cheeks, wear the same laced veils and bonnets of little pearls which their grandmothers handed down to them.

Vegetating in slavery, the Russian people is unacquainted with moral happiness, though it enjoys a sort of material happiness; for the poor serfs are sure of being always fed, lodged and warmed by the product of their labour or by their masters, and being free from all needs, never suffer the torments of want or the fear of falling into it.

The Russian landlords have a boundless authority over their serfs; but it is right to say that in practice almost all of them exercise it with the utmost moderation.

By the gradual improvement of manners, the enslavement of the peasants is slowly becoming what manorial service used to be in olden times in Europe. Each one pays a small due for the land he tills, and the distribution of that tribute is settled in each village by seniors chosen from among the heads of families. The great Russian nobles need to have great wealth, as they are almost obliged to keep a full Court at their houses.

Another kind of luxury which must one day ruin the nobility is the enormous number of domestics they keep. These servants are drawn from the peasant class, and look upon their service in the house as a sort of distinction and favour. Hence they would consider it a punishment and almost a degradation to be sent back to the fields. It is a strange prejudice, but even serfs have their prejudices.

The men and women domestics marry in the house, and populate it to such an extent that it is no rare thing to see a nobleman burdened with four or five hundred domestics of every age and sex, whom he considers himself obliged to keep though he can find them nothing to do.

I was no less surprised at another usage due to vanity; every person above the rank of colonel had to have his carriage harnessed according to his rank with four or six horses, driven by a coachman with a long beard and coat and two postilions.

In winter the wheels of the carriages are taken off. The carriages are then placed on skates as high as the wheels. As the streets are broad and covered with three or four feet of snow beaten down and as flat as the firmest, finest, smoothest sand, nothing equals the swiftness with which one glides about that beautiful city.

I have already mentioned the moderation shown by the great Russian proprietors in exercising their legally boundless authority over their serfs. During my long stay in Russia I saw several instances of the attachment of the peasants to their lords.

I could mention a hundred incidents of the kind, but I will confine myself to the following: the Grand Chamberlain, Count Shouvalov, having incurred a rather large debt, found himself obliged to sell an estate of his situated three or four hundred versts from the capital. One morning as he was getting up, he heard a great noise in his courtyard. A crowd of peasants were gathered there, and disturbed the atmosphere. He ordered them to come before him and inquired the reason of their visit.

"We have been told," they said, "that you have been obliged to sell the land we live on, in order to settle your affairs. We are very peaceful and content under your authority, and do not wish to lose so good a master. So after each of us paying his scot, we have come to bring you the sum you need and which we beg you to accept."

After some resistance the count accepted their gift, and tasted the sweet satisfaction of seeing his good deeds rewarded by this touching gratitude.

The effects of arbitrary power, which are cruel at times, weird at others, and rarely pleasant, are the inevitable consequences of the absence of all institutions and guarantees. In a country where obedience is passive and remonstrance forbidden, the wisest and justest prince or master must tremble at the results of an unreflecting will or an order given too precipitately.

Here is an instance which may seem rather mad; but it is a fact attested to me by several Russians, and which

one of my colleagues, now a member of the Chambre des Paires, often heard in Russia.

A very rich foreigner named Sutherland was banker to the Court and naturalised in Russia. He enjoyed considerable favour with the Empress. One morning he was informed that his house was surrounded by soldiers and that the Head of the police wanted to see him.

The officer, whose name was Relief, entered with a disconcerted look.

"Monsieur Sutherland," he said, "I am commanded by my gracious Sovereign to execute an order that appals me with its severity, and yet I do not know by what fault or crime you have aroused Her Majesty's resentment to such a pitch."

"And I, sir, know no more about it than you do!" said the banker. "My surprise is greater than yours. What is the order?"

"Sir," the officer replied, "I really haven't the courage to tell you."

"What then! Have I lost the confidence of the Empress?"

"If it was only that, you wouldn't see me so much aggrieved."

"Well, what! Am I to be sent back to my country? . . . Ah! my God!" exclaimed Sutherland, trembling. "Am I to be sent to Siberia?"

"Alas! that's a place one comes back from."

"Am I to be thrown into prison?"

"If it was only that!"

"Good heavens! Do they want to knout me?"

"It is a terrible punishment, but it doesn't kill."

"Then what?" said the banker, sobbing. "Is my life in danger? The good, kind Empress who spoke

THE HOLY GATE

PRINCIPAL ENTRANCE OF THE KREMLIN

By A. Durand

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to me so sweetly only two days ago, does she mean to . . . No! I can't believe it! . . . Oh, for mercy's sake, say what you have to say!"

"Very well, my dear sir," said the officer in a heart-broken voice. "My gracious sovereign has commanded me to have you stuffed."

"Stuffed!" exclaimed Sutherland, staring aghast at his visitor. "You are off your head, or else the Empress has lost hers. Surely you didn't receive such a command without protesting against its barbarity and extravagance?"

"Alas, my poor friend! I did what we in the ordinary way would never attempt to do; I showed my surprise, my grief. I was going to risk a humble protest, but my august sovereign angrily ordered me to go out and execute her command on the spot. 'Go!' she said, 'and don't forget that your duty is to perform without a murmur whatever task I deign to set you.'"

Words fail to describe the poor banker's astonishment, anger and shuddering despair. After allowing him to give vent to his grief for a while, the chief of the police told him that he would leave him half an hour in which to put his affairs in order. Whereupon Sutherland begged and prayed him a long time in vain to let him write a note to the Empress to implore her mercy. At last the officer yielded to his entreaties and, trembling all over, took charge of the letter, went out and fearing to go to the palace, rushed to the house of Count Bruce.

The latter thought that the chief of the police had gone mad. He told him to follow and wait for him in the palace. Then he ran to the Empress and told her about the matter.

On hearing the strange story, Catherine exclaimed: "Merciful Heaven! How shocking! Relief has indeed lost his head. Count, go at once and order that mad man to go immediately to my banker and deliver him from his maddening terror and set him free."

The Count immediately carried out the command. On his return to the palace he was surprised to find Catherine laughing loudly.

"I now see the cause of this burlesque," she said. "For several years I had a dog I was very fond of, and gave him the name of Sutherland, because that was the name of the Englishman who gave him to me as a present. The dog has just died. I ordered Relief to have him stuffed. As he hesitated, I got angry with him, thinking he considered a task of that sort beneath his dignity. There's the answer to this ridiculous riddle."

This story will no doubt seem pleasant; but what is not so is the lot of men, who can believe themselves obliged to obey an absolute will, however absurd its command may be.

On the other hand, I think it right to repeat that the public actions and wise designs of Catherine and her successors on behalf of civilisation form half the work that could be expected of a good legislation. During my stay of five years in Russia, I never heard talk of any incident of tyranny or cruelty. The peasants live in enslavement, it is true, but they are treated with gentleness. Not a single beggar is ever met with in the empire. If any were found, they would be sent back to their lords, who are obliged to feed them. And the masters themselves, though subject to an absolute power, enjoy by their rank and by social opinion a

consideration which differs little from that prevailing in other non-constitutional monarchies of Europe.

Russia has a real right to the kind consideration of foreigners. Nowhere else do they find a more courteous hospitality. I shall never forget the cordial reception extended to me in the brilliant circles of St. Petersburg. The relations I formed with men of real merit and charming women soon made me forget that I was a foreigner.

It was hard to find more gentleness and reason than was shown by Countess Saltikoff. Nothing surpassed the open-hearted and natural kindness of Countesses Ostermann, Tchernicheff, Pushkin and Madame Divoff. In Paris one would have admired the grace and charms of Princess Dolgorouki and her mother Princess Bariatinski, of Madame Tchernicheff and the fascinating Countess Skavronski, who might have served as a model for an artist to paint the head of Cupid.

The young Narishkins, Countess Razoumowski, a little bit older, a swarm of maids of honour, real ornaments of the Empress's palace, attracted people's glances, praise and homage. One came away with regret from the witty conversations of Countess Shouvalov and the pithy conversation of Madame Zagreski.

I will not omit to mention the old Countess de Romanzoff, mother of the marshal of that name, who was then almost a century old. Her paralysed body alone indicated her old age. Her head was full of life, her spirit full of mirth, her imagination full of youth. As she had a good memory, her conversation was as attractive and instructive as a well-written history. She had seen the laying of the first stone of St. Petersburg. Hence the expression " as old as the streets " would not have been an exaggerated form of speech for her.

She had assisted at Louis XIV's dinner in France, and described to me his appearance and manners, as well as Madame de Maintenon's dress, as though she had just seen them the previous day. She gave me some curious details of the life of the famous Duke of Marlborough, whom she had visited in his camp.

One day she gave me a perfect description of the Court of Anne of England, who had overwhelmed her with honours. Finally, she was fond of giving me to understand in her stories that Peter the Great had been in love with her. . . .

CHAPTER XIX

Journey to Moscow

MY INSTRUCTIONS offered me little hope of any great success. My rôle seemed to be confined to that of an attentive observer in a Court where we were without any influence. The only serious business entrusted to me was to get satisfaction, after several years of vain attempts, for the merchants of Marseilles, whose vessels had been taken and plundered by Russian pirates during the Turkish War.

The Empress bestowed upon me a mark of favour which I was very far from expecting. She asked me to accompany her on a journey she was about to undertake across her Empire to inspect the works which she had initiated with the object of removing the cataract obstacles in a canal joining the Caspian Sea with the Baltic, through Lake Ladoga, the Wolchoff river, Lake Ilmen, the Mista, Tuerza and Volga.

We set out on June 3rd. A score of carriages made up Catherine's cortège. From time to time she admitted to her carriage Prince Potemkin, Prime Minister and Minister for War, and Count Cobentzel or M. FitzHerbert and myself. The persons who constantly enjoyed that honour were Mlle Protasoff, her faithful companion, aunt of Countess Rostopsin, whose wit, learning and virtue were so much appreciated in Paris,

and M. Yermoloff, aide-de-camp and favourite of the Sovereign. The Master of the Horse was also frequently called there.

Having been more than once deceived by the fickleness and rivalry of several great ladies she had honoured with her confidence, the Empress admitted no others to her intimacy except Mlle. Protasoff, who was entrusted with the supervision of the ladies-in-waiting. Occasionally, however, she admitted to her company a niece of Prince Potemkin, Countess Skravonski.

Catherine had no guard to escort her. In this she recalled Voltaire's lines without regard to Laius:

Comme il était sans crainte, il marchait sans défense.*

We left at eight o'clock in the morning. Towards two o'clock each day we drew up for dinner in a town or village, where everything had been prepared in advance so that the Empress might be served and lodged almost as comfortably as in St. Petersburg. We always dined with her. Our run ended at eight o'clock, and the Empress spent the evening, as was her wont, in gaming and conversation. Every morning, after an hour's work before departure, Catherine received the homage of magistrates, nobles and tradespeople of the district. She offered her hand to all to kiss, and embraced all the women; which afterwards obliged her to perform a sort of second toilet, for by the end of the audience, owing to the universal use of rouge and powder by the women of all classes, the Empress's face was covered with red and white.

Her first care on arriving at a town was to visit the church and perform her devotions, the neglect of which would have deprived her of the affection of her people,

* As he was without fear, he walked without defence.

who were so ardent and superstitious in their beliefs as to worship St. Nicholas almost as much as God Himself. It was only in the places where the Empress stopped that a guard of honour indicated the Sovereign's presence.

In four or five days we arrived by an imperceptible incline at Vishny Volochok, the highest point in that vast territory stretching from the north to the Black Sea and unbroken by any mountains.

From the highest point we saw the famous locks that dam the water of several rivers and send them into the Tverza Canal, or that of the Mista, for the benefit of navigation to the Caspian Sea, or the transport of the produce of the south to St. Petersburg.

All along our route we saw old dried-up marshes, budding villages, towns just created or repeopled. Everywhere the people were benefited by these unbloody conquests over Nature, and were eager to demonstrate their sincere affection for their Sovereign.

Multitudes of peasants, kneeling down like serfs, in spite of their Sovereign's orders, sprang up to crowd round Catherine, whom they called Matushka (little mother), and spoke familiarly with her. After a short stay we thought we were going alongside the cataracts that hinder the course of the Mista as far as Borovichi, where we were to embark. But Catherine had a surprise in store for us. Without any warning or previous order, she suddenly decided to change her route and set out for Moscow.

The sight of that great city, situated in the midst of a vast plain, with its thousands of golden steeples and motley-coloured domes sparkling like prisms in the sunshine, the huts of its people and the rich houses of its merchants, the magnificent palaces of its numerous,

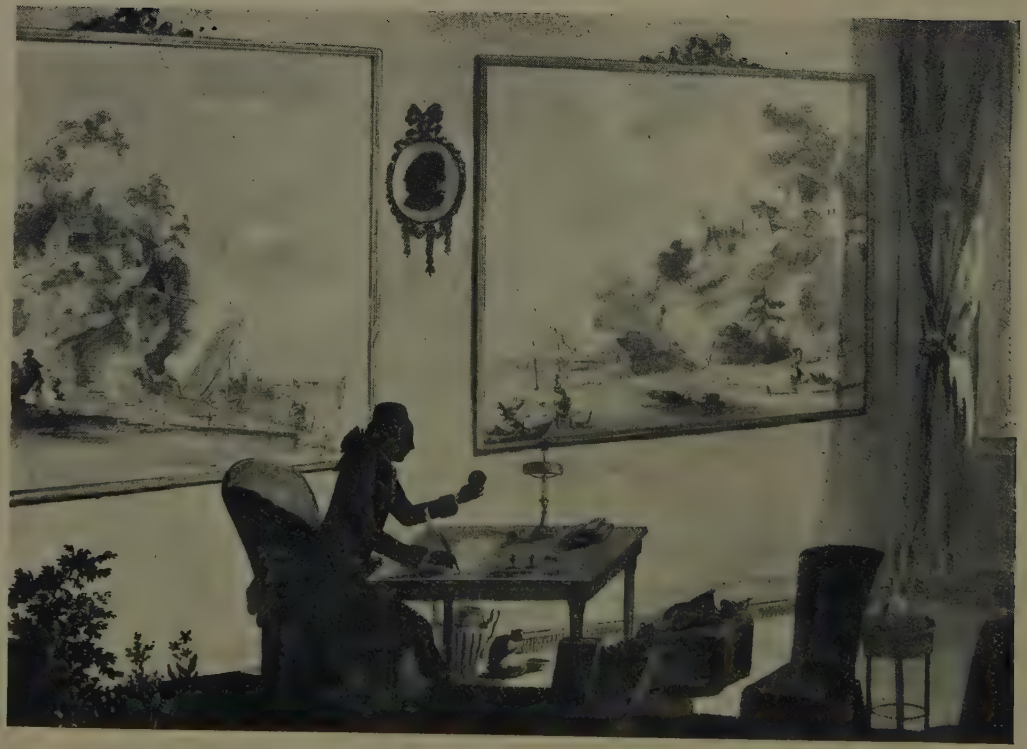
haughty nobles, its teeming population, with their contrasting manners, representing different ages, savage races and civilised peoples, European society and Asiatic bazaars, filled us with astonishment and admiration. However, I was only able to get a glimpse of the city during that first visit. We remained there only four days. Catherine showed us her Petrovski palace, her country houses at Kolominski and Tzaritzina, the public gardens of Moscow, and the fine aqueduct she had ordered to be constructed. Then we set out for Borovichi, passing through Tver, Tarjowest and Vishny Volochok.

Wishing to leave a generous mark of her short apparition, the Empress presented to the town of Moscow an endowment of 50,000 francs, and a large sum for the purpose of erecting a fine hospital in the place of the fearsome building which used to house the bloody State Inquisition in the reigns of the Empresses Anne and Elizabeth.

The town of Tver also received a number of favours. The town is very pretty. The pearl head-dresses, and long white gold-braided veils of its women, their rich belts, rings and gold buckles, seemed to take one back to some ancient festival of Asia.

We embarked at Borovichi in pretty barges. The Empress entered a very sumptuous one. The barge allotted to M. Cobentzel, M. FitzHerbert and myself contained three very elegantly furnished apartments, and carried musicians who woke us up or sent us to sleep to the sound of gentle harmony.

During this journey I availed myself of an unforeseen circumstance, and risked a step which helped me to realise a hope I had hardly dreamt of till then, namely, to make an advantageous commercial treaty with Russia,



COMTE DE SÉGUR
AT THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN ST. PETERSBURG

such as had been vainly planned by us for the past forty years.

A few days later, having entered the Ladoga canal, we arrived at St. Petersburg on June 28th, and thus terminated, in less than a month, one of the most interesting and pleasant of travels.

CHAPTER XX

The Life of an Ambassador

AS THE days went by, the Empress permitted me, on more and more occasions, to be near her. I saw her at the country-house of the Grand Butler and at that of the Master of the Horse. At the latter place she invited me on a visit to the munitions factory at Sisterbeck.

I remember how during that excursion she joked a good deal about what she had been told concerning the excessive expenditure of our Court, and the chaos in the accounts of the King's house.

Wishing to defend our cause a little, though it was not really a good one, and preferring retort to defence, I replied that " such was the lot of great monarchs who cared more for the affairs of the State than for their own, and did not need to imitate Charlemagne, who was admired because he himself counted the products of his farms, the sheaves of his fields, the hay of his meadows and even the vegetables of his garden, and the eggs of his poultry-yard; but, having no other revenues but those of his domains, he was unable to meet his expenses with taxes, because the Francs had none at that time. Our monarchs are all cheated, it is true; but even you, Madame, if I may say so, are robbed pretty frequently, judging from what I hear. I am not surprised; for

the items of the kitchen, stables and service are too trifling for Your Majesty to perceive or attend to."

"You are both right and wrong, Monsieur le Comte," she replied. "I am robbed like anyone else, I admit. I have even had proof of it with my own eyes from time to time when I look from my window at day-break or dusk and see enormous baskets, that couldn't have been empty, being stealthily carried out of my palace.

"I remember also how a few years ago, while making a trip along the Volga, I asked the people whether they were satisfied with their lot. The most part were fishers. They answered: 'We would be quite satisfied with the fruit of our labours and especially that of the sturgeon-fishing, if we were not forced to lose a part of our gains by having to send a great part of the fish to your stables in St. Petersburg.'

"'You are quite right in letting me know,' I replied to them with a smile, 'I was quite unaware that my horses were fed on sturgeon.' The ridiculous abuse was suppressed. But what I want to prove to you is the difference between the apparent disorder that strikes you here, and the real and far more dangerous disorder that prevails in France.

"The King of France never knows exactly how much his expenses are. Nothing is regulated or fixed beforehand. On the other hand this is what I do: I fix a yearly sum, always the same, for the expenses of my table, my furnishings, shows, stables and all my house. I order the various tables of my palace to be served with a given quantity of wine, a given number of dishes. It is the same in all the other branches of the administration.

"As long as I am supplied with proper quantity and quality and nobody complains of negligence in that

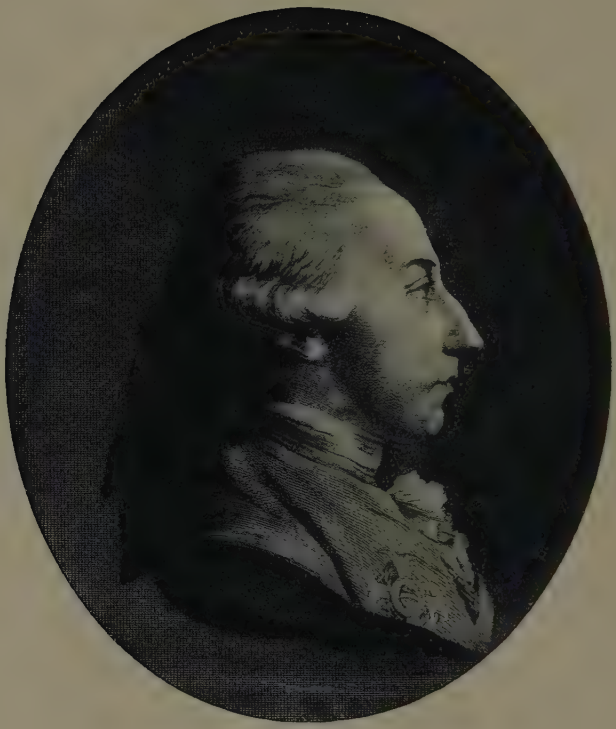
respect, I am satisfied. I don't care at all whether I am robbed with more or less cunning or economy on the sum fixed. The important thing is that the sum should not be surpassed. In this way I am always certain of how much I spend. That is an advantage that few princes or wealthy individuals can boast of."

Another time when she asked me what had struck me most at her Court, I ventured to reply:

"What surprises me most, Madame, is the imperturbable quiet that Your Majesty enjoys after so many years on a throne that was always a stormy centre. It is hard to imagine by what secret you reign so peacefully over a plot-teeming empire to which you came as a stranger and a young woman and where you never find rebels to repress or any obstacles to be overcome."

"It is quite simple," she replied. "I laid down for myself a set of principles, and a plan of government and behaviour, from which I have never deflected. Once my will has been expressed, it never changes. Everything here is steady. Every day is like the previous ones. As one knows what to rely upon, nobody is uneasy. Once I've given a post to anybody, he can be sure of keeping it, unless he commits a crime. In that way I remove all food for bickerings, reportings, quarrels and rivalries. Nor do you find any intrigues here, since the only aim of intriguers is to drive out persons in office in order to take their place; that kind of shuffling would be quite aimless under my government."

"I agree, Madame, that so wise a system must bear excellent fruit," I replied. "But, allow me to make a simple remark. It is impossible, no matter how much genius one has, not to be mistaken in one's choice occasionally. What would Your Majesty do, if by chance



JOSEPH II
By L. S. Boizot (1777)

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you realised that you had appointed a minister who turned out to be inept in administration, and incapable of justifying your confidence?"

"Well, sir," she replied, "I would keep him. It would be my fault and not his, since it was I who chose him. Only I would work with one of his underlings, while he would keep his title and place."

On September 6, 1785, Count Bezborodko wrote to me that the matter concerning the Marseilles merchants had been settled, and that at our first meeting the vice-chancellor would inform me of the decision and judgment, and the orders sent to the Foreign Office for execution.

The indemnity was rather weak. Our traders received only a small part of what they rightly claimed. But as many of their claims were not accompanied by satisfactory evidence, they were lucky to get back part of their fortune which they had given up for lost altogether.

Shortly afterwards there occurred an incident which I had in no way foreseen, and which put the Russian Government in a pretty bad temper, besides making them anxious regarding the sincerity of our protestations of friendship.

One of Catherine's agents in Persia had been insulted and deprived of the presents entrusted to his keeping. The Khan who ruled over Persia at the time was protecting the people of the Caucasus and Daghestan against the Russians. Another Russian agent was more fortunate, and managed to get himself favourably received by the Khan. With the aid of some Englishmen he was able to intercept the correspondence of M. Ferrières-Sauvebœuf, the French representative, who, it was alleged, had received orders to arm Persia against Russia.

Prince Potemkin was violently annoyed, and complained to me in very outspoken language of a behaviour which was so manifestly at variance with the peaceful demonstrations of our Government. Our discussion was very lively. I tried in vain to convince him that our emissaries were without diplomatic rights, and merely entrusted with the task of supplying information on the conditions of the country, and ought not to be given much credence, when, for the purpose of making themselves look important, they ventured to go beyond the bounds of their mission. I told him that we might have much more ground to complain, not only of Russia's secret agents, but of the Russian consuls in the Archipelago. They were regular fire-brands.

"Ah!" he exclaimed rather derisively, "there you are again with your tenderness for the Mussulmans! You must admit that I am not without justification in calling you sometimes Ségur-Effendi. However, I am going to show you the confiscated letters, and we shall see how your Ministry will explain them."

In spite of the jesting tone with which the conversation ended, it led to a certain coolness, for the time being, that delayed the progress of my negotiations. I sent the intercepted letters to Count de Vergennes, and informed M. de Choiseul of the matter. Both realised the necessity of damping down the restless ardour of their secret agents, and to take better precautions for the safety of their correspondence. On the other hand, it was not long before the imprudent writings of the emissary, who wished to exceed his rôle of simple observer, were given the lie and forgotten.

In negotiating the commercial treaty, my firmest supporter was Prince Potemkin. He was opposed to fiscality, and took a broad view of commerce. He

warmly took my side against Count Voronzoff, whose influence he took very much to heart.

Nevertheless, though he sometimes showed the genius of an eagle he more often had the fickleness of a child. Great things set him going, but small details disgusted him. Nobody thought out a plan more swiftly than he, carried it out more slowly, and abandoned it more easily.

Swift to set up factories, he soon began to neglect them. He was always ready to sell what he had just bought, or demolish what he had just built. A musical composition or poem would draw him away from a memorandum on commerce or politics, and too often his fickleness caused him to lose his influence in matters that demanded constancy and hard work.

Hence the activity of his rivals and his own laziness took all practical value from his influence over a clever and shrewd woman, who knew how to measure his qualities and defects.

In order to give a better picture of his bright intelligence, sureness of memory and fickleness, I will give an instance which caused me much heartache at the time and nearly led to a break between us.

One day I asked to see him concerning a new establishment that M. Anthoine of Marseilles, was setting up near Kherson in accordance with his wishes. He received me, and begged me to read out to him a voluminous memorandum I had just received from that merchant, who was well known for his influence, wealth and probity. The memorandum contained a good number of complaints concerning the difficulties stirred up by the local authorities, and indicated the various means he wished to be used in order to clear away all the obstacles.

While I was reading the memorandum aloud, I was greatly surprised to see the prince beckon into the room one after another and give orders to a priest, an embroiderer, a secretary, and a milliner.

I wanted to stop reading, but he begged me to continue. Annoyed by his strange conduct, I hastened to end the reading. At the end he wanted to take the memorandum, but I clasped it tight, and said to him rather bluntly that, as I was not accustomed to being listened to in that way and to treat serious matters so lightly, I had made up my mind never to discuss them again except with Count Voronzoff. He smiled, and said that he had heard everything quite well. I believed nothing of the sort and went out. For a long time after I ceased to discuss business matters with him.

Hardly three weeks had gone by when a courier brought me another letter from M. Anthoine, thanking me for having attended to his needs so promptly. He told me that Prince Potemkin had answered in detail all the points of the memorandum, and joined to his answer all the necessary orders to get rid of the difficulties and ensure the complete success of the enterprise. I immediately went to call on the Prince. As soon as he caught sight of me he flung his arms open and came towards me, saying:

"Well, batushka (little father), did I not listen to you? Did I not hear you? Did I not understand you? Do you think I can't do several things at the same time, and are you still going to be put out with me?"

I embraced and thanked him, being very much surprised at his ability and versatility.

Catherine II continued to give me frequent marks of her favour. Very early one morning I saw the Master

CATHERINE II

By Rosselin
Engraved by Caroline Watson

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of the Horse, Narishkin, enter my house with an enormous packet of letters, newspapers and pamphlets.

"Her Majesty," he said, "has ordered me to give you this packet which has been sent to you at her address from Paris. She wishes to inform you that if anything like this arrives a second time she desires that I should buy a little mule to carry them to you."

I thanked him with some surprise. Then he suddenly broke out into loud laughter without any further explanation.

I promptly opened a letter from my wife which explained the riddle.

"You will find my apparent boldness rather odd," she wrote, "and you will wonder what makes me take the venturesome liberty of sending this voluminous packet to you in the care of the Empress. You must put the blame on Baron Grimm. He wished it so. He is aware of Her Majesty's kindness towards you, and positively assured me that she would not disapprove of my action."

In spite of this assurance I approached the Empress at the Hermitage Theatre that evening with an embarrassment that she noticed. I was about to offer a few awkward excuses when she interrupted me, saying with a laugh:

"Write to Madame de Ségur on my behalf that she may continue sending you all the papers she likes under my address. You can at least be very sure that they won't be unsealed."

. . . . .

Catherine's celebrated journey to the Crimea had been interrupted.

The Prince de Ligne, who was a general in the Austrian armies, had informed the Empress that Joseph II of Austria would join her on her journey along the banks of the Borysthenes, while Count Komagerski was sent by the King of Poland to ask her for an interview near Kiev, which was granted him.

Our departure drew near.

The month of December had gone by, and still I received no news of the conclusion of the commercial treaty. The English and their partisans who were anxious for the defeat of my negotiations, were triumphant. But on January 6, 1787, a courier from M. de Vergennes arrived. I immediately went over the points which that minister proposed changing or adding to. On the seventh I asked for an audience; on the eighth it took place.

I read over to the plenipotentiaries a note proving to them the justice and moderation of the proposals I was charged to present to them. Their objections were few and short. They seemed to have been secretly ordered to terminate the matter. Nevertheless they insisted that their metals should have preferential treatment over the metals of other nations, failing which we were to lose the large rebate of duty which they had granted us on our wines and soaps.

M. de Vergennes had authorised me beforehand to yield on that important point, though only in the utmost extremity. Seeing that the plenipotentiaries were anxious to conclude, I resolved to take advantage of their state of mind, and instead of letting them know the authorisation I had received, I persisted in refusing any preferential treatment for Russian metals, which would do great harm to the metals of Sweden, our ally. I even went so far as to declare that

that difficulty alone was enough to prevent me from signing.

My audacity was successful. The plenipotentiaries were unwilling to break off the negotiations, and were satisfied with the stipulation that their metals were to be treated like those of the most favoured nation. For the sake of this equality, they confirmed the rebate of duty on our wines and soaps. Thus, being all very anxious to conclude the matter after a conference lasting two hours, we came to agreement on all points. On January 9th the acts were drawn up, and on the 11th we met once more, and signed the treaty, which I sent by courier to M. de Vergennes on the 14th. On January 17th I went to Tsarskoe Sielo, whence I left for the Crimea with the Empress.

A month before our departure for the Crimea, I regretfully witnessed the departure of Prince de Ligne who was to take the itinerary of the Empress to Joseph II. He joined us again at Kiev, bringing with him his usual companions, open hearted mirth, noble graciousness, and a certain versatility of the imagination which prevented conversation from lagging, and left no room whatever for boredom even in the midst of Court etiquette.

On January 17, 1787, M. FitzHerbert, Count Cobentzel and myself, having dined with the consul of Joseph II in St. Petersburg, went to Tsarskoe Sielo, where we found the Empress rather silent and pensive as was her wont. She was put out at not being able to take the Grand Dukes Alexander and Constantine with her. Moreover, her favourite aide-de-camp, Count Momonoff, had a touch of the fever, and Catherine felt like most persons who are too constantly favoured by fortune: the slightest thwarting of her desires filled her with chagrin and surprise. She received us well, but

spoke little, and made us play a game of loto with her. Her Majesty soon realised how bored I was with the insipid game. I began to doze in spite of my efforts to keep awake. She made a joke or two on that score. To get rid of my embarrassment I recited to her the following lines which I had written in Paris for the wife of the Maréchal de Luxembourg, a woman of great wit, who had a peculiar passion for that sad amusement:

Le loto, quoi que l'on en dise,
Sera fort longtemps en crédit;
C'est l'excuse de la bêtise,
Et le repos des gens d'esprit.

Ce jeu vraiment philosophique
Met tout le monde de niveau;
L'amour-propre si despotique,
Dépose son sceptre au loto.

Esprit, bon goût, grâce et saillie,
Seront nuls tant qu'on y jouera.
Luxembourg, quelle modestie!
Quoi! vous jouez à ce jeu-là?*

The round was a short one. At eight o'clock we were dismissed. We met again in the apartments of

* Whatever be said about it, Loto
Will long remain the vogue;
It is Folly's excuse
And rest for the witty.

This truly philosophic game
Puts all the world upon a level;
Despotic amour propre
Lays down its sceptre at Loto.

Wit, good taste, grace and repartee
Are as nought while this game's played.
Luxembourg, what modesty
For you to join in such a sport!

CATHERINE II

IN THE COSTUME SHE WORE ON LEAVING FOR THE CRIMEA

By Schebanoff

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Count Cobentzel, where we were none the merrier. The great journey which had aroused our curiosity and hopes seemed to weigh heavily upon us just as we were about to begin it. It was as though we had a presentiment of the storms and terrible upheavals that were not long in following on it.

CHAPTER XXI

The Journey to the Crimea

WE SET out on January 18, 1787. The Empress was accompanied in her carriage by Mlle. Protasoff and Count Momonoff, Count Cobentzel, the Master of the Horse, Narishkin, and the Grand Chamberlain, Shouvalov. The second carriage was occupied by FitzHerbert and myself, together with Count Tchernicheff and Count von Anhalt.

The retinue was composed of fourteen carriages, one hundred and eighty sledges and forty supplementary; five hundred and sixty horses were in readiness for us at each post.

The cold reached six degrees below zero. The road was wonderful, our sledges gliding so well that they seemed to fly.

As a protection against the cold, we were all wrapped in huge bearskin furs, which we wore over finer and more valuable coats. Sable caps covered our heads. Owing to these precautions we did not feel the cold, even when it fell to twenty-five degrees below zero. In the houses we lodged at we were more alarmed by the excessive heat of the stoves than by the cold outdoors.

At that season of the year the sun rose very late, and, after six or seven hours, left us in darkest night. However, oriental luxury was not lacking to light our way.

Enormous piles of pine, cypress, birch and fir wood were stacked at short distances along both sides of the route, and set fire to. Thus we passed through avenues of fires more brilliant than daylight.

Seventy-two versts beyond St. Petersburg we stopped for dinner at a pretty little new town called Rojhestvensk. Her Majesty had regained her natural good humour, and deigned to speak to me concerning her satisfaction at the conclusion of the commercial treaty between her ministers and myself a few days previously.

Outside the towns and villages the route was peopled by countless crowds of citizens and villagers, who braved the rigorous cold and greeted their sovereign with loud acclamations.

The Empress made the least possible change from the habitual order of her days during the journey. At six o'clock in the morning she rose and worked with her ministers. Then she took breakfast and received us. The journey was resumed at nine, and a halt was made at two for dinner. After the latter the journey was continued till seven.

Everywhere there was a palace or handsome house prepared for her reception. We dined with her every day. After spending a few moments at her toilet, Her Majesty would join us in her salon, talking and playing card games with us till nine o'clock, when she would withdraw and work till eleven.

In every town we were allotted comfortable quarters in the houses of rich townspeople, but in the villages I was obliged to lodge in peasants' huts, which were so narrow, hot and stuffy that it was impossible to sleep. A tiny window admitted a feeble light into the low chambers which were almost entirely taken up by an enormous stove, surrounded by wooden benches along

the walls. The top of the stove was used as a sleeping place by the peasant and his wife and children, without air or light save for a smouldering piece of resinous wood.

On the second day of our journey I was placed next to M. FitzHerbert in the Empress's carriage. Conversation was bright, merry, varied and unfailing. Her Majesty told us that, having been blamed for allowing a ship's captain to marry a negress, she had replied:

"It is obviously the effect of my ambitious designs against the Turks, since I have brought about the wedding of the Russian Navy with the Black Sea."

Apart from political subjects, all other matters likely to brighten a conversation were dealt with and sustained by the Empress with an abundance of reason and mirth, so that the days seemed short and we arrived at Porkhoff without noticing the distance. At the latter town we were received by Prince Repnin, the governor of the province, with a rather vain-glorious display.

We sometimes enlivened the evenings by playing secrétaire, making up enigmas, charades and *bouts rimés*. One day M. FitzHerbert suggested the words: *Amour*, *Frotte*, *Tambour*, *Note*. I completed them as follows:

> De vingt peuples nombreux Catherine est l'*amour ;*
> Craignez de l'attaquer; malheur à qui s'y *frotte !*
> La renommée est son *tambour*,
> Et l'histoire son garde-*note*.

Glory, already secured, and constant good fortune should make one indifferent to the shafts of envy and sarcasms that are unceasingly hurled by the malice of small minds against the great. Nevertheless, in this respect the Empress resembled Voltaire: the slightest

CATHERINE II

COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL OF THE JOURNEY TO THE CRIMEA

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sting wounded her vanity. She was aware that many people, especially in France, looked upon Russia as an Asiatic country, poverty-stricken, steeped in ignorance, darkness and barbarism, and that many people were fond of mixing up the new and European Russia with Asiatic uncouth Muscovy.

The work of the Abbé Chappe, which she believed to have been composed by order of the Duc de Choiseul still rankled in her heart, while her self-conceit was constantly tormented by the caustic humour of Frederick II, who took pleasure in talking with bitter irony of Catherine's finances and politics, of the bad tactics of her troops, the slavery of her people, and the unstableness of her power.

Thus whenever she alluded to his satirical remarks, which was very often, she would never refer to her own vast empire except as "*her little household.*"

"What do you think of my little household?" she would say. "Does it not seem to get furnished and grow larger little by little? I haven't much money, but I don't think it is made bad use of."

Another time she said to me:

"I wager, Monsieur le Comte, that at the present moment your fine ladies, exquisites and savants of Paris are deeply pitying you for having to travel in the land of the bears, among barbarians and with a tiresome Tsarine. I have every respect for your savants, but I like the ignorant better. Personally, I simply don't wish to know but what is necessary for the management of *my little household.*"

"Your Majesty finds amusement at our expense," I replied. "You know better than anybody what France really thinks about you. Voltaire is for Your Majesty a fairly brilliant and lucid interpreter of our opinion.

Rather you should be dissatisfied at times with the fear and jealousy which fill the Great Powers at the sight of the amazing growth of your *little household*."

"Yes," she would laughingly say to me sometimes, "you don't want me to drive the Turks out of my neighbourhood. You certainly have some fine pupils in them. They are disciples that do you honour. If you had such neighbours in Piedmont or Spain who brought you an annual dose of the pest and famine, and killed off yearly a score of thousands of your men, would you think it proper that I should take them under my protection? I think you would certainly treat me as a barbarian."

We had traversed about two hundred leagues in two days. The Empress felt somewhat tired. Nevertheless it would have been hard to travel in so rigorous a season with more comfort, magnificence and pleasure. The cold had disappeared in the multitude of precautions. Distance was swallowed up by the velocity of the sledges, while the longness of nights was wiped out by the brightness of the immense bonfires burning at every sixty yards.

Catherine decided to stop at Smolensk for three days. This delayed our arrival at Kiev, where a multitude of travellers from all parts of Europe awaited her. We set out once more, and arrived at Kiev six days later, on February 9, 1787. Kiev was the capital of the first Tsars of Russia. It is situated on the Borysthènes (Dnieper) at a distance of four hundred leagues from St. Petersburg. It was the end of the first part of our journey. Instead of restricting herself to the usual commonplace phrases, in all places the Empress thoroughly questioned the authorities, bishops, proprietors and merchants on their conditions, means, desires and

needs. By this means she secured their affection, and opened a way for the discovery of the enormous abuses which so many persons were anxious to conceal from her.

She said to me one day: "One learns more by talking to ignorant people about their own affairs than by consulting the savants, who have only theories, and would be ashamed not to answer you with ridiculous assertions concerning matters with which they have no positive acquaintance."

Catherine II was very rightly afraid of anything that might drag her along the dangerous path of innovation. I remember how angrily she inveighed to me against a poor doctor of her empire, a M. Samoïloff, who, she told me, had taken it into his head to treat the pest in the same way as small-pox. He thought that innoculation would gradually weaken the pest. He had tried it on himself and contracted the malady several times. He asked for permission to apply the dangerous practice generally. Instead of a pension and letters of patent for his invention, the poor doctor got a sound lecture.

On approaching Kiev I was filled with respect at the sight of its relics of ancient times. This impression was increased by the picturesque situation of the city. One could not help recalling that it was the frail cradle of an immense empire, that was once steeped in darkness and emerged so colossal and formidable but a century ago.

Kiev stands on the banks of the Dnieper on a height that rises perpendicularly in some places to 120 feet above the level of the water; which gives it an imposing aspect, and helps it to retain some of the appearance of its ancient grandeur.

As we had foreseen that we might be obliged to stay one or two months at Kiev, Cobentzel, FitzHerbert and I had ordered our servants to join us there so that we might be in a position to keep house in a fitting manner, and receive the distinguished persons of the country besides the visiting foreigners. Our precautions, however, were futile, and we were obliged to send our servants back. The Empress insisted that our expenses should be defrayed by her during the whole course of the journey.

When I arrived at the house which had been assigned to me, I found it full of every sort of provision. The Empress had sent a maître d'hotel, valets, cooks, upper servants, footmen, coachmen, carriages, postilions, fine silver plate, splendid linen, several porcelain services and exquisite wines. So nothing was lacking for the upkeep of the grandest state. She had forbidden anyone to take payment from us. As long as the journey lasted, we were not allowed to incur any expense except for the presents we chose to offer to the owners of the houses where we lodged and which had to be in keeping with the rank and quality of our hosts.

We complied with Catherine's wishes. And in the same way as I had lived a few days like a Polish magnate in Poland, I maintained my little Court in Kiev like a Russian Boyard or like one of the descendants of Rurik or Vladimir.

Once or twice a week the Empress held a full Court, and gave alternately grand balls and fine concerts. On other days her table was only laid for eight or twelve. The three ambassadors in her suite were constantly admitted to it, as were also Prince de Ligne and often Prince de Nassau.

We spent the evenings with her, when she would

FIELD MARSHAL PRINCE POTEMKIN

Engraving by James Walker (1792)

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tolerate neither restraint nor etiquette. The Empress disappeared, and only the pleasant woman was to be seen. Stories were told, billiards were played and literature was discussed.

The Empress took it into her head to compose verses. I spent eight days teaching her the rules of poetry. But as soon as we started applying them, we both recognised that the time could not be worse employed, and I believe it would have been hard to find an ear less suited to appreciate the harmony of verse.

Her brain was full of reason and politics, and was unable to find images to enrich her thoughts. Her mind seemed to fail under the fatigue of searching for rhythm and rhyme. Hence she came to the conclusion that her attempts in this matter would be not more fortunate than those of Malebranche, who said that after desperate efforts he had only succeeded in making the following couple of verses:

> Il fait le plus beau temps du monde
> Pour aller à cheval sur la terre et sur l'onde.

Catherine seemed to take her failure to heart. M. FitzHerbert said to her: "It is only natural, Madam. It is impossible to aim at every kind of glory at the same time, and you should have kept to the couple of verses you composed for your bitch and your doctor:

> "Ci-gît la Duchesse Anderson
> Qui mordit Monsieur Rogerson."*

Prince de Ligne prevented the slightest tedium from entering our little circle. He told hundreds of nice

*"Here lies the Duchess Anderson
Who stuck her teeth in Mr. Rogerson."

stories, and abounded in madrigals and songs. He alone used the right to speak what came into his head, and mixed a little politics with the charades and portraits. Though he sometimes forced cheerfulness as far as folly, he managed to get in from time to time some useful and pithy moral points. He was a courtier by habit, a flatterer by system, a good man by nature and a philosopher by taste. His jests made one laugh and never gave offence.

One day he mystified Count Cobentzel and myself in a rather original way. We had both been, like him, attacked by a slight intermittent fever for some time. He reproached us for being so indifferent about it, and refusing to follow any treatment. He exaggerated the state of our health, and pretended to be very anxious on our behalf. Finally he assured us that he had made up his mind to set us an example and was going to take every possible means to get better so as to be able to continue the journey.

Meanwhile, Cobentzel, who had been suffering rather badly with his throat, got himself bled. I myself took one or two doses of medicine. A few days later we came together at the house of the Empress, who said to the Prince:

"You are looking very well to-day. I thought you were indisposed. Has my doctor seen you?"

"Oh no! Madame," he replied. "My attacks don't last long. I have a special way of treating myself: as soon as I get an attack, I call my two friends; I get Cobentzel bled and Ségur purged and then I am better."

The Empress congratulated him on his prescription, which she said she was tempted to try, and did not fail to chaff us for our docility.

It was at Kiev that I received the last letter from M. de Vergennes. He charged me to inform the Empress that the King had decided to convene all the notables of the kingdom.

The Empress showed the greatest satisfaction on that account. All the foreigners at Kiev, of whatsoever nation, congratulated me. At that time everybody's mind was secretly stirred up by liberal sentiments, noble thoughts, the desire for reform—the fall of prejudices, the weakening of arbitrary power and for greater advance towards liberty (which is, properly speaking, nothing more at bottom than justice itself).

A few days later I learnt that M. de Vergennes had died. It was a misfortune for France; one might even say a loss for the whole of Europe, which had rightly benefited by his conciliatory spirit and enlightened wisdom.

Count de Montmorin, who replaced him, told me how pleased the King was with my conduct in Russia. But at the same time he requested me to find out very carefully the causes of a serious misunderstanding that had occurred at Constantinople between M. de Choiseul, the King's ambassador, and M. de Bulgakoff, the Russian Minister, concerning differences which might lead to war in spite of all our care to avoid it.

About the same time M. FitzHerbert received the despatches of the British Cabinet, who refused to subscribe to the ultimatum sent by the Russian Envoy. From that moment all negotiations regarding the renewal of the commercial treaty between England and Russia were definitely broken off.

The ratifications of the Treaty I had concluded had just been exchanged. Each of the four Russian pleni-

potentiaries received 40,000 francs from the King of France and His Majesty's portrait framed with diamonds, whose value amounted to the same sum. Both French and Russian chancelleries received a thousand ducats each.

The Empress gave me her portrait hung with diamonds, as well as three fine furs and 40,000 francs. A few days later, I received her portrait showing her in her travelling costume. It was far more like her, and a copy of it is shown in these memoirs.

To have signed a commercial treaty was not enough: it was necessary to get real results. I invited M. de Montmorin to arrange with the Finance Minister concerning the best means for encouraging the establishment of French houses in the Russian ports, without which our treaty would be little more than an illusion.

I reminded him of all the wise regulations of the British factory in Russia, and, for the encouragement of our navigation in the north, I suggested a great diminution of the anchorage, loading and unloading dues with which our ships were charged, whereas they ought only to be imposed on foreign ships. I also requested that schools for the teaching of the German and English languages should be set up in our ports, so that our traders might not be forced to prefer Dutch, English or Hamburg shipping to our own. My requests were ignored; people's minds were already too uneasy in France. . . . The more one feared disturbances at home, the more one grew afraid of anything that might lead to war. Therefore the Minister urged me again to try and penetrate the real intentions of the two imperial Courts.

THE EMPEROR JOSEPH II WITH HIS STAFF AT A REVIEW

Engraving published in London 1st Sept., 1780

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My success in this respect was rendered very difficult by a great number of obstacles. The persons who might have been useful to me, that is, the underlings of the administrations, were absent. I was living in the midst of a Court that was kept ignorant of everything. Political secrets, if there were any, remained shut up among Catherine, Prince Potemkin and Count Bezborodko. Never was I so near the sovereign and yet so far from affairs.

Catherine's imagination was unable to remain at rest. Hence her plans were far more hasty than mature. It was obvious that this hastiness stifled a part of the inventions of her genius at their inception.

At one and the same time she wished to form a Third Estate, attract foreign trade, establish manufactures, extend agriculture, found credit, multiply paper money, raise the exchange, lower interest, build towns, create academies, people the wastes, man the Black Sea, annihilate the Tartars, invade Persia, continue her conquests over the Turks, shackle Poland and extend her influence over the whole of Europe.

Winter was over. The waters of the Dnieper were no longer ice-bound. Nature, casting aside her veil of mourning and flaming with the fires of spring, gave Catherine the signal to depart.

On May 1, 1787, the Empress embarked on her galley, followed by the most pompous fleet ever seen on the great river. It was composed of more than eighty ships with three thousand men for crew and garrison. At their head were seven galleys of an elegant shape and majestic grandeur, artistically painted and garnished, with a numerous crew in uniform. Gold and silk gleamed in the sumptuous apartments constructed on the decks.

One of the galleys in the wake of the Empress received on board M. Cobentzel and M. FitzHerbert. A second was allotted to Prince de Ligne and myself. The others were assigned to Prince Potemkin, his nieces, the Grand Chamberlain, Master of the Horse, ministers and personages whom Catherine had allowed to accompany her. The rest of the fleet bore the lower officers, luggage and munitions. Mlle Protasoff and Count Momonoff were lodged in the galley of Her Majesty.

Each of us had a room and study both as luxurious as they were elegant, a comfortable divan, an excellent bed in taffety and a mahogany writing table.

Each galley had its own band. A multitude of sloops and boats hovered unceasingly at the head and by the sides of the fleet, which looked like something out of fairyland.

Our progress was slow. We stopped frequently, and we availed ourselves of the opportunity to walk along the banks of the river and on the fresh, green islands with which it was scattered.

An immense concourse of people greeted the Empress with thundering acclamations as soon as they saw the sailors of her majestic squadron dip rhythmically their painted oars into the waters of the Dnieper to the roar of the guns.

Often we saw small bodies of Cossacks manœuvring over the plains along the riverside. Towns, villages, country houses, and sometimes the rustic huts were so wonderfully adorned and disguised with garlands of flowers and splendid architectural decorations that they seemed to be transformed before our eyes into superb cities, palaces suddenly sprung up, and magically created gardens.

The snow had disappeared. A smiling verdure clothed the earth. The meadows were enamelled with flowers. Brilliant sunshine coloured all things. The air was full of the harmonious music of our galleys; while the different costumes of the spectators along the shores lent variety to the rich and moving picture.

Only our mornings were free. We spent them in reading, conversation, visits from one galley to another. We went every day to the Empress's galley and dined with her. Her table never had more than ten places. Once a week, however, she invited all the persons who had the honour to accompany her. On that occasion her dinner was served on board a very great ship, where sixty diners were easily accommodated. Five days after our departure we stopped at the town of Kanieff, where the King of Poland awaited us with his Court.

It was there that the interview between Stanislas and Catherine was to take place. Twenty-five years previously both had been remarkable for their grace and beauty, both had been united in mutual love, and after so much splendour, both were no less changed in their looks than in their sentiments. I never saw the Empress so pleasant as on the first day of our navigation. The dinner was very gay. We were all delighted to get away from the sad town of Kiev, where the ice had blocked us for three months. Spring poured youth into our ideas. The beautiful weather, the magnificence of our fleet, the majesty of the river, the movement, the joy of the countless spectators along the riverside, the military and Asiatic mixture of the costumes of the thirty different nations, finally, the certainty of seeing new things each day stirred and sharpened our imagination.

Our navigation was to cover the four hundred and forty-six versts between Kiev and Kaydak. At the latter place the cataracts begin, and we were to take our carriages again in order to reach Kherson.

We arrived without mishap at Krementchuk on May 10th.

There we saw a vast, elegant house built and arranged in the Empress's taste; an English garden where the magic of Prince Potemkin had had some enormous trees transported at great expense; a delightful view in which the shady foliage, flowers and waters lent charming variety to the perspectives; twelve thousand troops all newly dressed and fitted out; all the nobility of the province assembled in rich attire; and the foregathering of merchants of all the countries of the empire; all this and the pleasure of being on the move after three months' confinement, were the preludes to fresh scenes that I was about to witness.

Catherine's satisfaction was manifest to all eyes. Every day she saw something new and interesting to nourish it. Extraordinary in everything and at all times, Prince Potemkin was as active in his provinces as he was indolent in St. Petersburg.

He utilised with an amazing cunning all the means that his lively imagination, unlimited power and deep knowledge of the Empress's character could supply in order to flatter her self-conceit and exalt her in her own esteem.

He seemed to have an amazing knack of overcoming all obstacles, conquering Nature, shortening distances, screening misery, cheating the eye of the dreary uniformity of the long stretches of sandy plain, and the mind of the boredom of a long journey, and giving a look of life to the most sterile of wastes.

All the stopping places were mapped out so as to avoid the slightest lassitude. He took care not to let the fleet stop except in front of villages or towns in picturesque situations. Immense herds of cattle brightened the plains. Groups of peasants enlivened the banks. A countless multitude of lads and lasses, singing the folk songs of their country, were continuously around us. Nothing was forgotten.

It must be admitted that though this prime minister was a poor general, capricious politician and far from being a great statesman, he was the greatest and cleverest of courtiers.

Prince de Ligne, who was twenty years older than I, constantly amazed me with the liveliness of his imagination, and the youthfulness of his mind. In the morning he would wake me by knocking on the thin partition between our beds and would then recite his improvisations in verse and song. A little while after, his man would bring me a letter of four or six pages in which folly, wit, politics, gallantry, military anecdotes and philosophic epigrams were mixed together in a most remarkable fashion.

He demanded a prompt reply. In this way there followed a strange and very exact daily correspondence between an Austrian general and a French ambassador, lying side by side on board the same galley, not far from the Empress of the north, and navigating the Dnieper across the land of the Cossacks in order to visit the land of the Tartars.

Our days found pleasant variety in a thousand different amusements, the curious and pithy stories told us by Catherine, the witty, though somewhat melancholy reflections of M. FitzHerbert, the follies of the Master of the Horse, and the inexhaustible gaiety

of M. de Cobentzel, who made us play at proverbs in the Empress's bedroom (a kind of talent in which he excelled).

Nevertheless, rocks and delays became more and more numerous, and the anxiety of the Empress, who was impatient to meet Joseph II, was on the point of turning into bad temper, when we suddenly learnt that the Emperor had left Kherson the day after his arrival and had gone in all haste to Kaydak, from which place we were only six leagues distant.

It had been that monarch's intention to come to meet the Empress; but Prince Potemkin, who had gone ahead to Kaydak, warned his sovereign in time. She took to land, leaving nearly all of us still on board, hastily seated herself in her carriage and rushed to meet the Emperor, whom she found near the lonely house of a Cossack. There they stopped a few hours, leaving together later on for Kaydak, where we rejoined them the next morning, May 19th.

We remained at Kaydak all day in order to wait for those of our ships which had not foundered, and above all for the men and things that were indispensable for the continuation of the journey.

On the 20th, a camp of tents was pitched two leagues away, on the spot where the Empress intended building Ekatérinoslav. The Mass was celebrated in the Imperial tent and their Majesties, in the presence of the Archbishop, laid the foundation stone of the church of the new capital, which is in a delightful position. It is placed on an eminence affording a charming view of the winding Dnieper and its wooded islands.

Leaving Ekatérinoslav, we entered again what is called the Steppes, vast and lonely prairies absolutely

devoid of trees and crossed at long intervals by a few bare hillocks, watered at their base by shallow brooks. One may often travel seven or eight leagues without meeting a man, house or bush. Immense flocks of sheep and numerous troops of horses were the only objects to be seen in those dreary solitudes.

The entire extent of the country from the Bug to the Sea of Azov, in Europe, and from the Caucasus to the frontiers of China, in Asia, is nothing but an immense sea of verdure.

The wilderness of a hundred leagues, which we had just traversed, helped perhaps to increase our surprise and pleasure at the sight of Kherson. I think, however, that apart from the disposition due to our state of mind, we could not have failed to be rightly astonished at the sight of so many new and imposing creations. There was a fortress almost completed; barracks for twenty-four thousand men; an admiralty with all its stores; an arsenal with six hundred pieces of cannon; two warships and a frigate ready for launching; public edifices going up on all sides; several churches of noble architecture; finally a town already doing trade, with two thousand houses, shops full of merchandise from Greece, Constantinople and France, and about two hundred trading vessels moored or coming into port.

The King, whom I had seen at Kanieff, had neither power nor authority, though surrounded with all the splendour and magnificence of a great monarch. Such was the King of Poland. On the other hand, the powerful Emperor Joseph II, whom I saw at Kherson, was simple in his living, modest in manner, familiar in his way of receiving, opposed to all etiquette and allowed all manner of subjects to be discussed, having no desire

for any other splendour than that which he derived from his extensive knowledge, solid judgment and cultivated mind.

When Catherine II presented me to him at Kaydak, he said to her:

"Madam, I am only Count von Falkenstein here, and it is I who must be presented to the Minister for France."

The Emperor had arrived in Russia in a simple calèche, accompanied by an officer and a couple of servants. He found his strict incognito very useful for the purpose of seeing and hearing better. Hence he insisted on being treated as a traveller and not as a monarch.

In conversation he showed me that he was ill-disposed to second Catherine's ambitions. He considered that our King's policy in that respect was very wise. "Constantinople," he said, "would be an object of jealousy and a subject of discord, which would prevent the great powers from agreeing on the division of Turkey."

I found that he had no great opinion of the progress of Russian establishments. "I find more vain show than reality," he said. "Prince Potemkin is very active, but more suited to begin great works than to finish them. Besides, everything seems easy when you can squander money and men's lives. We should not be able to attempt in Germany or in France the things that are ventured upon in this country without any obstacle. The master gives the order; legions of slaves set to work. They get little pay or none at all. They are badly fed. They dare not let a murmur escape their lips, and I know that for the past three years the exhaustive labour and insalubrity of the swamps in these new

APOTHEOSIS OF CATHERINE II

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provinces have killed fifty thousand men without anyone pitying or even speaking of them."

We left Kherson on May 29th for Kisikerman, which is situated on the right bank of the Dnieper, seventy-five versts to the north-east of Kherson.

It was there that the Empress began to treat me once more with her usual kindness, after being out of temper and refusing to speak to me for several days. Some obliging courtiers had assured her that I was pining to get away from her and to get back to France and to avail myself of the leave which M. de Montmorin had recently sent me.

Thus, as she got into her carriage at Kisikerman, she said to me without waiting for my reply: "Why put yourself out, Monsieur le Comte, if you are afraid of being bored by the deserts, which prevent you from leaving for Paris, where so many pleasures beckon to you?"

I was naturally anxious to have an explanation for so strange and unexpected a question. So, as soon as she was settled in her camp and we could see her, I went up to her and asked her the meaning of the joke which I had failed to understand.

"It is not a joke," she replied. "I have said it several times before. I was certain that your fine Paris ladies were pitying you for having to do fifteen hundred leagues in a barbarous country in the midst of a desert with a tiresome Tsarine. Now that I have learnt that you have asked for leave, I wish to put you quite at your ease in that respect, in spite of the displeasure your departure may give me."

I protested strongly against the strange idea she had of me, and my sentiments for her. "It would be, Madame," I said, "as though you judged me to be blind,

ungrateful and without discernment or taste. I venture even to add it grieves me to see that your judgment is still slightly prejudiced against the French, who have given no cause for it. In no other country are you so much admired and appreciated as in France, and in that point I represent my country very faithfully. It will be with genuine regret that after Your Majesty's return to St. Petersburg I shall have to leave your Court for a while. To make me leave sooner, you would have to exile me."

"I have no such desire!" she said, laughing. "I would like you to remain always with me, and you know that very well. If I have owed you a slight grudge for the visit which your bearded Turks, your spiritual disciples, recently paid me, my displeasure is altogether over."

She then spoke to me concerning the proposals that were to be made to the Sublime Porte. "The King of France will realise from my condescendence that my desire for peace is sincere, and that I am not so ambitious as people are pleased to suppose."

Thereafter she treated me with her former graciousness and cheerfulness.

In the evening, after she had dismissed her company, the Emperor desired to enjoy the beautiful nightfall. He took my arm and we went out of the camp, walking a long while across the vast plain.

Seeing some camels and Tartar shepherds wandering about, he said to me: "What a peculiar country! And who would have dreamed of seeing me with Catherine II and the French and English Ministers wandering about the wilderness of the Tartars? It is quite a new page in history."

"I rather think," I replied, "that it is like a page

out of ' A Thousand and One Nights,' and that my name is Gisfar, and I am walking with the Califf Haroun-el-Rashild disguised according to his wont."

A few moments later the Emperor suddenly stopped and rubbed his eyes. " Really," he said, " I don't know whether I'm awake or whether your remark about ' A Thousand and One Nights ' gives me an illusion. Look over there."

I turned my head, and the same object that aroused his surprise caused the greatest astonishment in me. There before us, at a distance of some two hundred feet, was a large, high tent gliding all alone over the grass and making towards us.

Notwithstanding the tall grass, we ran to get a better look at the peculiar phenomenon. Presently the tent stopped, and we saw about thirty Kalmucks emerge from within.

The Emperor told me to go in. As he had laughingly made some signs to the Kalmucks, they followed me inside and let down the cover over the entrance so that I was, so to say, their prisoner.

Then everything was explained to me. The tent is made in the following way: A sort of trellis is made with laths and placed in a circle about four feet high, above which is a sort of wooden wainscoting, breast-high. Resting on this are big laths about thirty feet high. A little wooden circle at the top prevents them from meeting and they are all fixed with leather pegs. The whole structure is then decked with a cover made of camel skin, which reaches to the ground. Flaps of the cover are raised on the side where no wind or sunshine is to be feared. Beds and divans of the same skin are spread inside the tent. An aperture is left at the top for the escape of smoke. Thirty men can live

comfortably inside these tents while their flocks lie down outside.

When they shift their camp, they take off the cover, unfasten the pegs, tie all the laths in a bundle and put the lot on a cart. But when they merely wish to go a short distance, all the Kalmucks inside the tent turn in the same direction, lift up the trellis, and walk with their house over them.

It was this manœuvre that had caused our surprise, when we saw the great tent moving without any sign of being drawn or driven by man or beast.

The Kalmucks showed me how it was done, and then let me out. Outside I found the Emperor laughing merrily over my imprisonment. He went inside the tent and agreed with me that it would make a very comfortable dwelling for those who were used to it.

Next day we arrived at Pérékop, the narrow isthmus which separates the Black Sea from the Sea of Azov.

On June 30th we passed the famous Pérékop lines, which, in spite of their strong position and the depth of their trenches, have never been able to arrest the forward march of any foe, and are now no more than an object of curiosity. We afterwards visited the fortress of Or which protects them.

As we were coming out, we saw a fairly numerous body of Tartar cavalry, richly dressed and armed, which came to serve the Empress as a guard of honour. Having great, lofty and bold ideas, she had refused to be escorted during her stay in the Crimea except by the very Tartars who were so disdainful of her sex, hostile to the Christians and only recently conquered by her. So unexpected a proof of confidence succeeded, as does almost everything audacious.

THE NEW PALACE AT ST. PETERSBURG

Drawn by Cheavlier de Lespinasse

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"You must admit, my dear Ségur," said Prince de Ligne to me with laughter, "that it would create quite a stir in Europe if the twelve hundred Tartars that surround us were to take it into their heads to rush off with us to the nearest port and ship the august Catherine and the powerful Joseph to Constantinople for the amusement and satisfaction of His Highness Abdul-Hamet, the sovereign commander of the Faithful. Such a piece of cleverness would not be altogether wrong, for they could very well trick a couple of sovereigns who, in contempt of the right of nations and all treaties, have tricked them of their country, dethroned their prince and deprived them of their independence."

Fortunately this mad design did not cross the minds of the loyal sons of Mahomet.

We continued our route very peacefully under their escort, and stopped for the night at a place called Aïbar, where a camp had been arranged for us and a pretty house erected for the Empress.

M. FitzHerbert and I were lodged in one of the Tartar tents which I have just described. The Russians were surprised to see an English and a French ambassador united in the closest friendship, notwithstanding the rivalry between their countries and the opposition of their interests. Nobody could speak ill of the one without the other taking up his defence.

The Empress was very much amused at so rare a friendship, and no doubt she found it very entertaining to make us sleep in the same tent and to write at the same table our despatches, which were surely drawn up in two very opposite directions.

At Bakhchisarai Prince de Ligne came and said to me with laughter: "Do you know what our two royal

travellers, the powerful Emperor of the Romans and the illustrious Autocrat of all the Russians are busy with at present? I have just overheard a few words of the despots' conversation. Well, my dear, who would have thought it? They are having a friendly talk on the beautiful subject of re-establishing the Greek republics."

"You don't astonish me so much as you think," I replied. "It is futile to try to drive away the air of one's times. Everybody is obliged to breathe it and get impregnated with it. The air of our age is that of philosophy and freedom. It is slowly spreading everywhere, and enters palaces as well as huts. It cannot be kept down. If force is used to do so, as England recently attempted in America, it will only transform it into a furious wind." Prince de Ligne made fun of my philosophic view. Neither of us realised that it was a prophecy.

The curiosity of Prince de Ligne, who was younger at fifty than I was at thirty, led me into a piece of boldness that fortunately led to other results than those we expected, but which taught us a stern, but rightful lesson.

No greater offence can be given to the Mussulmans than that of approaching their women. In this respect, all pleasure, even that of looking at them, is forbidden to any man except their husbands.

This prohibition irritated the inquisitive desires of Prince de Ligne. He said to me: "What's the use of going through an immense garden when one is forbidden to examine the flowers? Before I leave the Crimea I must at least see a Tartar woman without her veil. I've quite made up my mind on that score. Will you accompany me on the undertaking?"

I did not resist the temptation at all and we went through several valleys with hopes that were long deceived. At last, not far from a lonely house we caught sight of three women seated at the skirt of a wood and bathing their feet in a clear stream.

We slipped up behind the bushes without making the slightest noise, and came up right in front of them under cover of a bush.

As their veils were lying on the ground, we could see the women's faces at our ease. But alas! what a disappointment! Not one of them was pretty, or young or even passable. "Egad!" exclaimed my companion. "Mahomet was not so very wrong in ordering them to hide their faces."

Whether they heard him or whether the rustling of the leaves betrayed us, I know not, but our three Mussulman women jumped up and ran away shrieking.

We were about to go and pacify them, when we saw a number of Tartars run down the hillside shrieking louder than the women, threatening us with their daggers and throwing stones at us.

As we had not come to do battle, we took care not to wait for them. A short run and the thickness of the wood relieved us of their pursuit.

So far, the evil was not very great, according to the lax moral which says that Sin that is hidden is half forgiven; but my imprudent friend was not satisfied with that.

Next day at dinner with the Empress we found her silent and mournful. The Emperor was deep in thought and Prince Potemkin grave and distraught. Conversation was at a low ebb. Languor was in the air.

So to cheer up Her Majesty and enliven her guests, Prince de Ligne, who hated ennui, took it into his head

to relate our adventures of the previous day. I found it no use pinching him. He went on undaunted with his story.

His listeners began to laugh as he had expected, but Catherine turned a stern and steady eye upon us, saying:

"Gentlemen, this joke is in very bad form and sets a very bad example. You are in the midst of a people conquered by my arms. I wish its laws, worship, customs and prejudices to be respected. If I had been told about this adventure without the heroes' names, I should have been very far from laying any suspicion upon you. Rather I should have thought some of my pages guilty and I would have punished them very severely. . . ."

We had no reply to make. Prince de Ligne remained as silent as I did and grew more and more embarrassed at his indiscreet loquacity. Our resignation satisfied the Empress, who recovered her usual gaiety. A few days later, when she gave an audience to a Mussulman princess, the niece of Sahim Guerray, she allowed us to conceal ourselves so that we could see everything without being seen.

The princess was prettier than the three Tartar women. Nevertheless her painted eyebrows and shining cosmetics made her look just like a piece of china, in spite of her lovely eyes.

We continued our journey towards the east of the Crimea and arrived at Stary Krim, twenty versts from Soudak and the same distance from Theodosia.

The Empress had first intended following the coast towards the north in order to visit the towns of Ararbat, Mariopol, Taganrog, Cherskak, the capital of the Don Cossacks, and finally, Azov. But the advanced

MOSCOW DURING THE CARNIVAL

THE ICE MOUNTAINS

By Courvoisier

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season, unhealthiness of the sea shore and important business at St. Petersburg made Catherine alter her route. So Theodosia was the last place of that great journey.

Just as I was leaving those ruins, a strange adventure happened to me. I would not have felt obliged to relate it if I had not thought it would give a good idea of the manners of an enslaved country, and also of Prince Potemkin's originality.

We were about to set out. The Empress had already got into her carriage, and in order to join her, I hastened precipitously down the outside steps of her palace. Suddenly I caught sight of a young woman in Asiatic garb. Her stature, walk, eyes, brow, mouth and all her features put before me the perfect image of my wife. The resemblance was amazing.

I was struck motionless with surprise. Was I awake? For a moment I thought that Mme de Ségur had come all the way from France in search of me, and that it had been arranged to keep her in hiding and bring about this unexpected meeting. Imagination moves rapidly, and I was in the land of marvels.

Seeing me standing as motionless as a statue, Prince Potemkin called to me in vain, and ran to tell me that the Empress was waiting for me. The young woman went her way and my vision vanished. In a few words I told the Prince about it.

"Is the likeness so perfect?" he asked.

"Utter and incredible," I replied.

"Very well, then, batushka (little father)," he replied, laughing. "That young Circassian belongs to a man that will allow me to dispose of her as I think proper. As soon as you get to St. Petersburg I will make you a present of her."

"I thank you," I replied. "I am unable to accept it, and I think that such a proof of sentiment would seem rather strange to Madame de Ségur."

We separated, and I thought that all was at an end; but a short while after the Prince gave me to understand that he had taken umbrage at my refusal, attributing it to a false delicacy which prevented me from receiving a present from him.

"I will prove that you are in error," I said to him, "by accepting any other offer you care to make."

He took me at my word, and on his return to the capital after the capture of Oczakoff, he made me a present of a young Kalmuck child called Nagun. It was the most original little Chinese figure you could imagine. I took care of him for a while and taught him to read. But just as I was about to leave for France, Countess von Cobentzel, who found him very amusing, entreated me to give him to her: which I did. I still have the portrait of that little Tartar.

We left Caffa in order to go straight back to St. Petersburg. After crossing once more the Crimean steppes, the isthmus of Pérékop, and the wilderness of the Nogais, we reached Kisikerman, where Joseph II and Catherine parted company, after assuring each other of their mutual friendship, which had been greatly strengthened by the long journey. At Krementchuk, the Prince de Nassau left us for France. I gave him my despatches, advising M. de Montmorin that he would be able to inform him better than anyone else regarding the military resources of Russia and the dispositions of Prince Potemkin, with whom he had been intimately associated before joining us at Kiev.

On July 4th we arrived at Kolumensky, a handsome

pleasure house of the Empress, situated about two leagues from Moscow.

There the Empress rested three days, after which she went to the Kremlin in Moscow. Before leaving for St. Petersburg she rested again at Petrovsky, another pleasure house a league or so from Moscow.

During the latter part of our journey, I had a short conversation with Catherine, which I think I ought to relate because it reveals the fiery temper of that extraordinary woman.

I was in the same carriage with M. FitzHerbert. Conversation was very slow on account of the extreme heat. Catherine had fallen asleep, or at least appeared to have done so. FitzHerbert was talking to me. After a number of subjects, the conversation turned to the American War, and the revolt that had deprived England of thirteen flourishing provinces.

FitzHerbert asserted that the loss would be more profitable than harmful to his country. Such a paradox amazed me, but he held to his opinion with much persistence and ingenuity, trying to prove to me that it would not be long before England, relieved of the very great expense of administering her colonies, would derive immense advantages, without any expense, from her trade with them, and would thereby find sufficient compensation for the loss of an illusory domination.

The discussion went on, and the Empress did not open her eyes till it was time to alight from the carriage. Next day, when I was with her and Prince de Ligne, she said to me:

"You had an extraordinary conversation with M. FitzHerbert yesterday. I can't imagine how, with

all his intelligence, he could talk in such a peculiar way."

"How then, Madame?" I replied. "Could you possibly have heard us, and yet you seemed to be so very much asleep?"

"I only took care not to open my eyes," she replied. "I was too anxious to hear the rest of your conversation. I don't know whether King George III has the same opinion as his Minister; but I know that if I had lost even one of the thirteen provinces, I would have blown my brains out with a pistol."

"I fancy, Madame," I rejoined, "that you have made a secret covenant with Fortune."

"May be," exclaimed Prince de Ligne, "but certainly with such strength of character, which the vulgar would call stubbornness, one takes away other people's provinces and keeps one's own."

I will say little about Moscow: the name recalls too many gloomy things. Besides, there have been hundreds of descriptions of that great and beautiful capital. Few of our families are without a veteran covered with glory and wounds, whose stories have acquainted them with the palaces, gardens, churches, barracks, hovels, fields, Kremlin, Chinese quarter, and golden domes, which make Moscow appear like several groups of palaces or castles surrounded by their villages.

The flames have devoured the greater part. Since then, it has risen from its ashes, and will be a new city that our travellers will have to visit and describe.

It is easy to imagine the magnificence of the festivities with which the proud and wealthy nobles greeted the Empress, but it was rather tiring to attend them, and it would be still more tiresome to describe them.

COLOURED ENGRAVING OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

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On the other hand, they were very real feasts for the merchants and people of Moscow; for, in order to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of her reign in a proper manner, the Empress remitted a part of the taxes they should have paid her.

The Empress gave a medal which she had had struck for the occasion to all those who had accompanied her on her journey.

After resting a few days at Petrovsky, she set out for St. Petersburg. We arrived at Tsarskoe Sielo on July 22nd.

CHAPTER XXII

Last Months at St. Petersburg

HAVING no imperative reason for prolonging my stay in Russia, I decided to avail myself of the leave which had been granted to me. I was confirmed in my resolve by the arrival of the Chevalier de Sainte Croix, whom M. de Montmorin sent to St. Petersburg to act as Chargé d'Affaires during my absence.

Consequently, on September 5, 1787, I took leave of the Empress and left M. de Sainte Croix an informative memorandum in order to acquaint him with the preceding and actual state of affairs of the King in Russia.

The end of the memorandum was a sort of report to His Majesty and his Council of all that had occurred during the time of my mission, of my efforts to render our mediation necessary to the Empress and useful to the Sublime Porte, and finally, a few pages setting forth the details of our differences and political connections with Russia since the advent of Catherine to the throne.

I was about to enter my carriage with all the pleasure of one who is returning to his native country after a long absence, when I received a message from the Empress. She invited me to dine with her, though I had already taken leave, and she begged me to put off my departure for a few days.

I yielded to her commands. After dinner, I went with her to the Hermitage Theatre.

The aspect of that theatre corresponds very badly to its name. When you arrive you are struck with the grandeur of the apartments and galleries, the magnificence of its furnishings, the great number of pictures of the great masters that adorn it, and the pleasant winter garden, where the verdure, flowers and singing birds seem to bring the spring of Italy into the midst of the polar ice.

A very select library rather hinted that the hermit of the place had more affection for the lights of philosophy than for monkish practices.

Another thing to be seen was a sort of living history. It was a collection of medals of all countries and ages.

At the far end of the palace was the theatre, handsomely constructed and copied on a smaller scale from the ancient model of the theatre at Vicenza. It was a half circle without boxes, and set nothing before the eyes but an amphitheatre of steps.

Once a fortnight, in winter, the Empress invited the diplomatic corps and all the persons presented at Court to assist at the show. At other times the spectators were little more than a dozen, usually the Grand Duke and Duchess, Momonoff, the aide-de-camp, the Grand Equerry, the Grand Chamberlain, Count Strogonoff, the vice-chancellor, Count Bezborodko, Prince Potemkin, Countess Skavronski, his niece, Mlle. Protasoff, Ambassador Cobentzel, Prince de Ligne, and myself.

At the Empress's command a good comedy troupe had been brought over from France. The one I saw was a collection of very fine talents. There was the celebrated actor Aufrène, while some famous composers

and virtuosi, Paesiello at first and Cimarosa later on, Sarti, Marchesi, the singer, and Mme Todi were the delight, not of the Empress, whose ear was insensible to harmony, but of Prince Potemkin and a few enlightened music-lovers.

Catherine II wished to follow a fairly complete course of our theatrical productions. Every evening she witnessed pieces by Molière or Regnard. But nothing could have been greater than the embarrassment of our poor actors when they found themselves called upon to play on a large stage, before a magnificent, well-lighted hall with only a dozen spectators to people the solitude. Even the unanimous applause did not produce a very encouraging noise, and it would certainly have been better to weigh the compliments than to count them.

The Empress asked me to read over to her a tragedy called *Coriolan*, which I had composed on the ship on my way back from America. She took such an indulgent view of it that she insisted on having it performed.

I tried in vain to dissuade her; she insisted. I managed, however, to get her to agree that the performance should only take place before the Empress's small circle.

So my *Coriolan* was played two or three times before an audience of twelve persons, and I had no need to be afraid of a cabal among them. The bravos were, therefore, universal and the author was called for.

It is well-known, however, that Court promises are very airy things, and he is a wise man who does not build his hopes upon them. Anyhow, the plot was laid, and I was kept in utter ignorance of what was to happen.

One Thursday I was invited to the Hermitage Theatre with the Diplomatic Corps and the entire Court. I

ALLEGORY

arrived. The Empress called me. She made me sit down in the row below hers. The curtain went up. The actors came on, and to my great astonishment I realised that my tragedy was being performed.

Never in all my life did I feel so embarrassed. The actors played marvellously well, and the public, following the Empress's lead, applauded valiantly.

I must have had a very awkward look. I remained silent and rigid, my eyes lowered like a statue. But all of a sudden the Empress, who was just behind and above me, took me by either hand and obliged me to clap myself.

After that kind piece of fun, I had perforce to take courage and carry off, as best I could, the numerous compliments which courtesy did not allow anyone to forego.

The year 1789, which was destined to see so great a revolution in France, and separate our cabinet from the rest of Europe, began without any of them foreseeing so violent an upheaval. Nevertheless there had been several warning flashes of lightning for some months previously, but nobody realised what sort of storm was approaching. It was thought that a few wholesome reforms would put an end to the passing difficulties of our Government.

It was an age of illusions. The King and his ministers, the Parlements and the three orders of the State, every Frenchman, in fact, was stirred with love for the common good, and seemed to be lulled by deceitful dreams.

Still hoping to see my Government continue its task of mediating between Russia and her enemies, I availed myself of the capture of Oczakoff to approach the Russian Ministry with peace overtures. The latter were well

received; but the Empress demanded the release of M. de Bulgakoff as the first condition before any further discussion of terms.

She maintained that the quickest way to end the war and outwit the intrigues of England and Prussia was to consolidate our power by concluding the projected alliance. Her desire to form this bond had become so strong that she offered, not only her neutrality in the event of war with England, but her effective help as well. Finally she gave up asking us to guarantee the Polish constitution, and satisfied herself with our guarantee for the integrity of Polish territory.

It was much more than I had expected. And I was very much surprised when, instead of receiving the order to accede to her proposals, I was told to try and obtain from both Imperial Courts the annulment of the first division of Poland.

I spoke to Count von Cobentzel about it. He was not only more surprised than myself, but begged me in Heaven's name not to hazard such a step, the effect of which would be to upset the Empress and drive her into the arms of England.

It was already a good deal to succeed in keeping Catherine away from the desire to conquer more of her neighbours' lands without dreaming of the vain task of getting her to give up what she had already taken. I made, therefore, no further confidences, and as the first were probably not unknown to the Russian Government, I thought I had done all I could to carry out the extraordinary order I had received.

On every other point Count von Cobentzel gave me his active support; for the Emperor was greatly discouraged by his defeat at Bannat, and was very anxious for an immediate peace. Prince Potemkin had the same

desire, and I learned from M. de Nassau, who had just returned from the army, that the Prince was beginning to look upon us as weak and uncertain supports, and was disposed to change his plans and advise his sovereign to come to an understanding with England and Prussia, who, to his mind, were more formidable foes or more useful friends.

I received from Versailles my final instructions. They were dated 19th March, 1789. M. de Montmorin wrote to me: "Seeing that the Spanish Court is unwilling to enter the Quadruple Alliance, and confines itself to the maintenance of the treaties whereby it is obliged, in the event of war, to help us against the English, the King has considered afresh the actual state of Europe. His Majesty thinks that an alliance with Russia would probably involve us in difficulties with Turkey, unless it was kept very secret, in which case it would not produce the desired effect, namely, to overawe the Anglo-Prussian League.

"The essential thing is to act briskly as mediator, and to hasten forward the peace; for once peace is concluded, the Quadruple Alliance will be no longer necessary. The King is always loath to guarantee the integrity of Poland, a country in which His Majesty has for many years had no influence whatever; it would mean exposing oneself unnecessarily to the chances of a distant war.

"Moreover, the Estates General are to be assembled for the purpose of getting rid of the difference which exists between our revenues and our expenses. It will not be until after that object has been attained that the King will be certain of fulfilling his old engagements. Until then, he cannot make up his mind to contract any new ones.

" Though he ought to rely on the love of his subjects and the immensity of the national resources, he would not consider it wise to alarm people's minds with the prospect of an imminent war. Once France is reassured, she will regain her strength and power, and will become a truly useful ally. Such are the motives for a necessary delay. His Majesty is persuaded that the Empress will appreciate their solidity, and give the frankness of his conduct its due.

" On the other hand, the King is still willing to lay down the framework of a projected union, without investing it with the forms that are to consecrate it until the time when the difficulties that have just developed will no longer be. That time would be when peace is established between the two Imperial Courts and the Porte, and when the home affairs of France have been settled after the Estates General."

Such were, in substance, the instructions so long awaited, which I was authorised to communicate to the Russian Ministry. M. de Montmorin added a treaty proposal drafted by him, and in a letter in his hand-writing, informed me that " the Council were of one mind on the utility of the alliance, but that the King's scruples did not permit him to sign such a treaty with Russia while it was still at war with the Turks."

I conformed exactly to the unexpected orders I received, and did my best to appease the bad temper which they provoked in the Russian ministry.

In the first days of May a courier arrived from Vienna with despatches that made the Empress very uneasy. She was informed that the Emperor Joseph had received the Last Sacraments. She was so deeply affected by this news that she fell ill. A second courier arrived

PAUL I, EMPEROR OF RUSSIA

SON OF PETER III AND CATHERINE II

(*Anonymous painting of XVIIIth century*)

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and reassured her with the news that the Emperor's life was out of danger for the time being.

The Empress went about this time to Tsarskoe Sielo, and allowed me to accompany her. The happy news she had received helped her to regain her gaiety: the Emperor was getting better; Kamenski had just beaten a large body of Turks, and Michelson had routed a Swedish division; Romanzoff had divided his army into three parts, and was directing one towards Yassy, the second to Wallachia and the third towards Bender.

Presently we were informed that Kamenski, following up his successes, had attacked the Pasha Ibrahim, near Galatz, taken him prisoner and captured his camp.

At last what I had so long foreseen occurred. Prince Potemkin and several ministers wished to persuade the Empress to come to an understanding with England. In order to secure their ends, they told her that M. de Choiseul had given the Turks a very cleverly thought-out plan of campaign. They added that while accusing the English and Prussians of intriguing, our ambassador was himself all the while exciting the Mussulmans to continue the war.

Catherine very readily adopted this fable, and spoke bitterly about it to Prince de Nassau. "The French Court," she said to him, "is not acting in good faith towards me, or its orders are very badly executed by its ministers. I have been assured (and I find it hard to persuade myself it is true) that M. de Ségur communicates to my ministers only deceitful extracts from the despatches he receives from M. de Choiseul. The King of France has just provided Gustave III with subsidies. He refuses, under vain pretexts, to conclude

the Quadruple Alliance. All this political conduct seems to me far from frank and almost hostile.

"I don't wish to make a great show, because I have little fear of the evil that France can do me, but I don't like people to think I can be duped by false protestations. I wish, therefore, that you, who must have become Russian by now, should write in confidence to M. de Montmorin and make him realise that his refusal to conclude the treaty of alliance and the conduct of his ambassador at the Porte do not allow me to place any further confidence in him."

Nassau came without delay, and gave me an account of the conversation. I easily recognised in all these false reports an intrigue of Prince Potemkin, who hoped thereby to get the Empress away from us. He was successful in the beginning. On her return to St. Petersburg, Catherine ceased to speak to me with her usual kindness. She no longer invited me to the special evenings at the Hermitage, and whenever I went there with the Diplomatic Corps, she affected an extreme coldness towards me, and said pleasant things to the English and Prussian Ministers, time after time.

Our rivals carried the day, and all those who regulated their conduct on the caprices of favour kept more and more aloof from me, treating me like a minister in disgrace.

I was taken aback at the success of these cunning intrigues, and as they were likely to destroy the influence I had regained for France in Russia with so much difficulty, I was very anxious to find a means of outwitting the Ministerial and Anglo-Prussian manœuvres.

Meanwhile I received a very long despatch from M. de Choiseul. I could not have written one more suited

to the circumstances. He gave me a detailed account of the whole conduct of the English and Prussian Ministers at Constantinople, and of the tricks they had used to keep the Turks away from any idea of peace or armistice. Not only did he relate the substance of their notes and memoranda to the Porte, but he had copied out the very expressions they had used.

Had I been able to bring them to the knowledge of the Empress, she would have certainly been greatly annoyed, when she realised to what extent she had been deceived; but M. de Choiseul's despatch was in cipher, and I have already mentioned that the Empress had been put on her guard against my sincerity by being made to believe that I was in the habit of giving her Minister a very untruthful analysis of our ambassador's letters.

Nevertheless it was urgent that I should not let the opportunity slip by, as it might never occur again for a long while. Under the circumstances, I resolved on a new course of action. It was so bold that I did not think it proper to let my Court know about it. I did not even inform M. de Montmorin of it, till I got back to France.

If this daring means had not succeeded, it might, perhaps, have seemed blameworthy; for by using it, I might have compromised the safety of the State cipher code. In making known my daring action I consider it my duty to warn young Frenchmen about to enter diplomacy never to imitate my example. Indeed, to risk the step I took on that occasion, one had to know, as perfectly and intimately as I did, the mind, spirit and character of the sovereign who inspired me with so much confidence. Success alone could absolve me, and it was complete.

I begged the Prince de Nassau to come and see me.

"You see," I said to him, "how low our credit here has fallen, and you know what means have been taken for its overthrow. You also know that the Empress, who is being deceived, has a very noble spirit, and a very lofty character. Tell me, therefore, what means I must take to enlighten her on the intrigues that teem around her, in order to outwit them. Here is the despatch of M. de Choiseul which I have just deciphered. The words are between the lines under the ciphers. The reading of this letter will shatter all doubt regarding our loyalty and the deceits of our enemies. I am going to fold it as it is and write on the cover: 'It is not to the Empress but to Catherine that I address this despatch.'

"Take it, my dear Prince. Ask the Empress for a special audience and give her this letter on my behalf. If she leaves you for a moment and enters her study, I am mistaken in my judgment of her. A secretary might copy a few lines, the key to the cipher would be compromised, and I should be guilty. But, if I am not mistaken, she will not go out, and will give you back my despatch at once. Go quickly and come back immediately."

Nassau approved of my plan, ran to the palace and obtained an audience. As soon as he was *tête-à-tête* with the Empress and mentioned my name, the Empress said with a dash of ill temper: "What can M. de Ségur want with me?'

Whereupon, without a word in reply, he presented her with the letter.

Catherine took it from him, showed great surprise on reading the address, hastily opened the envelope and began to read the despatch. Meanwhile, Prince de

THE COVENANT OF FEDERATION OF THE FRENCH PEOPLE

Contemporary engraving

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Nassau gently withdrew and pretended to be going out. The Empress immediately ran after him, took him by the hand and said: "Ah, Prince, don't go away. I do not wish you to leave me for one instant!"

She then resumed her reading. At the end she folded up the despatch and handing it back to M. de Nassau, said to him in deeply affected tones: "Run, Prince, run to M. de Ségur and assure him that I will never in all my life forget this touching mark of his esteem and confidence. I am worthy of it. He has read me aright."

I was in no small state of agitation waiting for the return of the messenger, and it ought not to be hard to imagine how great was my satisfaction when he informed me of the prompt and happy result of my mission.

Next day the Court was invited to the Hermitage. As soon as I arrived there the Empress called me and made me sit by her side. She paid little attention to the acting, and during the entire show conversed in low tones with me.

Surprise stood upon the faces of all the Ministers. Those of our rivals, who were triumphant the day before, could hardly conceal their disappointment.

The scene had changed. From that moment the Empress lavished her favour and kindness upon me. She listened with disdain to all the insinuations against the good faith of our Government. Notwithstanding her troubles at home, France retained her dignity and influence in Russia as long as I was there, and Catherine II kept so well the secret of my confidence in her that neither Prince Potemkin nor any of his Ministers were able to discover by what means I had so promptly regained my credit with the sovereign.

Bad news was again received from Finland: the Swedish general, Steding, had completely defeated General Schultz at Pomala and captured his artillery. Catherine seemed to me to be more annoyed than uneasy at the defeat.

She spoke to me with deep concern of the affairs of France. "Your Third Estate," she said, "put forward some pretty high demands. It will arouse the resentment of the other two orders, and the resulting discord may have very long and dangerous results. I am afraid the King may be forced to make too many sacrifices in order to satisfy the demands." A few days later, the Vice-Chancellor asked me to go and see him at once. I did so, and he informed me of what had happened in Paris on July 14th. He told me that "the people of the capital had risen and captured the Bastille; that the King had been forced to go to the Hôtel de Ville; disorder was at its highest, and the laws were flouted everywhere, the nobles insulted and the castles plundered."

As nobody had written to me (in accordance with the custom followed by many ministers through fear of being compromised), I was quite unable to make a suitable reply, and to distinguish between what was true and what was exaggerated in the reports.

They spread very rapidly, and were very differently received, according to the sentiments and situation of the persons they reached. At Court the uneasiness was very great, and dissatisfaction general. In town the effect was just the opposite. And although the Bastille offered no danger to any of the inhabitants of St. Petersburg, it would be impossible to describe the enthusiasm which the fall of that State prison and the first victory of stormy freedom aroused among the tradespeople,

merchants, bourgeois and some young folk of a higher class. French, Russians, Dutch, Germans, English, Danes, rushed into the streets and kissed one another as though they had been set free from heavy chains. The folly did not last very long. Fear soon put a stop to it. St. Petersburg was not the place in which to give expression to such sentiments without danger.

There soon came a distraction from these events, and the battles taking place a short distance from the capital engaged everyone's attention. Though the victory of Steding had been hushed up, the details leaked out, as usual, and were greatly exaggerated. The Ministry took alarm, and prohibited, under severe penalties, all discussion in public places of the war with Sweden.

Fortune soon ceased to be unfaithful to Catherine. She ordered the fleets of Chichikoff and Kasilinoff to unite. The Swedish fleet tried to prevent them. The fight went on for eight hours without any great loss on either side, but the Russians claimed the victory because they succeeded in uniting.

Prince de Nassau beat and put to flight twenty Swedish vessels, several of which carried twenty-four pounders, and, braving the fire of the numerous fortified islets, he got through all the passes. We also learnt that General Suvaroff and the Prince of Coburg had defeated 30,000 Turks, captured Foczany, twelve standards and the Mussulmans' camp.

From all quarters came alarming letters on the subject of our troubles at home. At the end of September, having obtained all I could wish for in Russia, a commercial treaty, the acceptance of our mediation and the promise to sign the Quadruple Alliance as soon as our Government should make up its mind, I had

nothing more to do in St. Petersburg, except stand and watch; which a Chargé d'Affaires could certainly do as well as I.

A month previously I had written to M. de Montmorin to ask for leave. I was doubly in need of one, for I had contracted a chest trouble which I was told might become dangerous if I passed another winter in that icy climate. I had been away from my country five years. Moreover, tremendous storms were breaking out in the bosom of my native land.

We had been informed that, on August 4th, the nobles at the evening session had offered to sacrifice their ancient rights and privileges to the nation.

The incident of July 14th might have been looked upon as a passing insurrection, but August 4th proclaimed a great revolution. It was a new social order establishing itself on the ruins of the old one.

My preparations were soon made. I presented my secretary of legation, M. Genet, to the Ministers as Chargé d'Affaires, leaving him full instructions for the conduct of affairs. Finally I took leave of the Empress. The audience would have given me much sorrow if I had thought it was to be the last time I should see her; but I was merely going away on leave, and hoped to return in a few months' time. She deigned to show some regret at my departure, and spoke to me a good deal about matters in France. "Tell the King," she said, "how deeply I wish for his welfare. I trust his goodness will meet with the reward it deserves, that his plans may succeed, that he may see the cessation of all the evils that afflict his heart, and that France may soon recover her peace, strength and preponderance. I am quite sure the last will be favourable to me, and will never be so to my enemies.

"I regret to see you go. You would do better to remain near me, and not to go after troubles, of whose extent you may be still unaware. Your inclination for the new philosophy and freedom will probably lead you to support the popular cause. I am very sorry, for I shall always remain an aristocrat: it is my craft. Think on it, you will find France flushed with fever and very sick."

"I fear it is so, Madame," I replied, "but that is why I feel it is my duty to return home." She made me stay to dinner, and showered kindnesses upon me.

I said good-bye to a number of persons whom I shall never forget, and who had treated me for over five years more like a compatriot and friend than a foreigner. On October 11, 1789, I left St. Petersburg and went to Gatchina to take leave of the Grand Duke and Duchesse. I had only expected to remain there half an hour, but owing to the axle of my carriage breaking, their Imperial Highnesses very kindly pressed me to stay a couple of days with them.

The Grand Duke Paul Petrovich had plenty of wit and knowledge, but a very restless, distrustful nature, and the most unsteady character. Often he was affable to the point of familiarity, but more often he was haughty, despotic and hard. Perhaps there never existed another man so fickle, suspicious, whimsical, and less capable of making other people or himself happy. His reign proved it. It was not out of sheer wickedness that he committed so many injustices and disgraced or exiled so many persons. It was due to a sort of mental disease. He tormented all who came near him, because he was constantly tormenting himself. To him the throne was always surrounded by precipices. Fear upset his judgment. He feared so many imaginary evils that he

caused real ones to crop up; for a monarch inspires sooner or later the distrust he shows or the terror he feels.

Since then, one of my colleagues of the *Chambre des Paires*, who was at St. Petersburg during Paul's reign, told me of an incident which illustrates the latter's despotic character. Having allowed General Dumouriez to go and see him frequently, and finding that the General had let one day pass without availing himself of the permission, the Emperor said to him at their next meeting:

"Have you been ill?"

"No, sire!" Dumouriez replied, "but as I was invited by one of the most important persons of your Court to dine with him, I did not think I could refuse the invitation."

"Let it be known to you, monsieur," said the monarch, in very severe tones, "that nobody is more important here than the person to whom I speak and while I am speaking to him."

When I first arrived in Russia, Paul showed me so much affection that it bordered on infatuation. It lasted a very short while. He grew very cool towards me when he saw that I was honoured with his mother's kindness and intimacy.

For a long time he showed no further desire to draw me nearer to himself, but just as I was about to leave, a fresh whim restored his confidence in me. For several hours on end he told me all about his grievances against the Empress and Prince Potemkin, the disabilities of his position, the fear in which he was held, and the sad lot that was being prepared for him by a Court accustomed to put up with and desire no other rule but that of women. His father's dreadful end horrified him. He thought about it so often that it had become his one idea.

I was very much flattered by the gracious reception given me by the Grand Duchess.

I took leave of their Imperial Highnesses and set out. I was so impatient to make my journey as short as possible that I travelled night and day without a stop till I reached Warsaw.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Revolution

EVEN though I had been without news of the movements which had been stirred up in Poland during the past eighteen months by the desire for freedom and the seductive promises of the King of Prussia, I could easily have recognised the fermentation in people's minds from the general movement I noticed when crossing a fairly large part of that country. The peasants alone retained that sullen look, expressionless face and apathetic stillness, which are the usual signs of servitude. But all the roads were crowded with gentlemen on horse or driving in all directions. In the towns and public places they assembled in groups, and talked heatedly with one another. Everything revealed a tremendous agitation. I was particularly struck by the strangeness of this great sight at Warsaw.

As soon as King Stanislas-Augustus knew of my arrival, he invited me to go and see him.

At the palace I heard of the sad events that had taken place at Versailles on the 5th and 6th of October. Some said that the Queen had been in very great danger, that a great number of the Guards had been massacred and that the National Assembly had been invaded by brigands. Others declared that some troops and guards had trampled the national cockade underfoot in an orgy,

THE SQUARE AT CRACOW

By Pa.-P. Ricaud

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and announced their intention of starting a counter-revolution. Whereupon the people of Paris had gone to Versailles in a rage, attacked the palace and obliged the monarch to follow them as a prisoner to the capital. Others were less alarming, and merely talked of some excesses committed during the night, which had been promptly put down by the National Guard.

I decided to hasten my departure and set out next day.

The Marquis de Noailles, our ambassador at Vienna, had offered to put me up at his house. I found him bewildered by the news he had received from Versailles. He believed that France would certainly be ruined. I too, was rather uneasy for the time being, but had more hope for the future.

When I crossed the French frontier my emotion was so deep that it brought tears to my eyes. Five years' absence at a distance of eight hundred leagues from my country had prevented me from getting a proper idea of the extraordinary changes in our laws, characters, minds and manners. Even before I spoke to anyone, I felt a great surprise along the road itself. Everything that met my gaze was unexpected. Bourgeois, peasants, labourers, even the women, had in their bearing, gestures and faces something proud, independent and spirited, which I had never seen in them before. An extraordinary coming and going was to be seen everywhere. In the streets and open spaces I noticed groups of men talking excitedly; my ears were struck by the rattle of drums in the villages, and I was amazed at the great number of armed men in the townships.

If I put a question to any members of the lower orders, they answered me in a bold tone. On all sides I saw the mark of the sentiments of liberty

and equality which had then become such violent passions. My thoughts and the novelty of the things that aroused them made my journey so short that when I caught sight of Paris I was almost surprised at my arrival.

When I saw my father, I congratulated him on his leaving the Ministry, when he was no longer able to do any good in it. I found he still had the same strength of character which had always been his distinctive merit, and the same affection for me; but he no longer showed the calm and impartiality for which I had formerly so much admired him. I was very much struck by the change, and it showed me what a great hostility in people's minds and exasperation in their hearts I was about to discover.

Like all the men of his age, my father had remained an utter stranger to the ideas of the new philosophy. He had a religious respect for our old institutions and looked upon all departures from them as dangerous follies. His prudence would not have been alarmed by a few gradual reforms, but he saw nothing that was not sinister in a revolution that, under the pretext of breaking all shackles, shattered so many links that to him were sacred. Hence he considered all who took part in the revolution as madmen and criminals. He spoke to me of several of my friends in a way that caused me much pain, especially as the accusation was unjustified, for nothing was more noble and disinterested than their sentiments. But I soon realised that my father's opinion was far from being exclusively his, and represented the opinion of a great part of upper society. Almost all the men of his age and rank had the same impressions. Forgetting all the causes that had led to the destruction of the old régime, they perceived nothing but the blow

struck at order and discipline, the ancient rights of the throne and those of the nobility and at their habits and interests.

Thus, from the first conversation I had in the heart of my own family I could easily see what was the mind of a whole party, the one which was called the *Aristocratic Party.*

By a remarkable chance I was able that same day to hear the opinions and sentiments of the opposing party, which was called the *Patriots' Party.* My friend and nephew, General de La Fayette, who was then in command of the National Guard, came to see me in the afternoon.

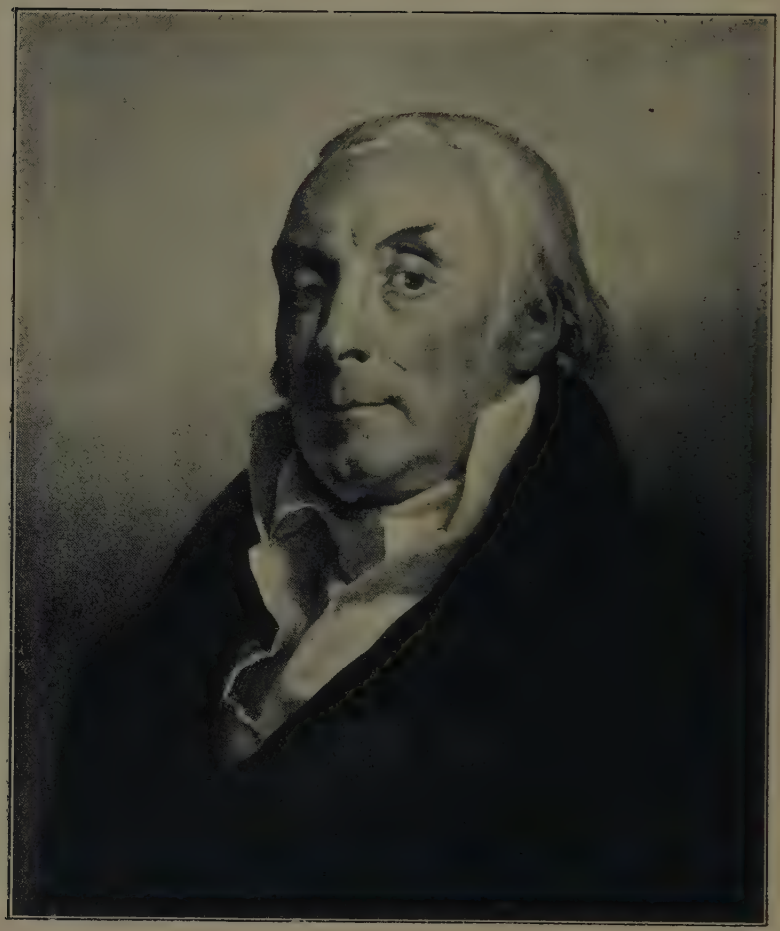
The most distinguishing feature of M. de La Fayette was an unchangeable firmness of character, which always tended inflexibly towards the same goal. To work unceasingly to establish, extend and consolidate liberty was the dominating idea which for more than fifty years had guided his conduct, warmed his heart and dictated his words.

Hence, at the time I saw him, he thought he had realised the height of his desires. Nevertheless he seemed to me to be deeply grieved at the tumultuous scenes and excesses of the people that had besmirched the first days of the revolution. "I don't know by what misfortune," he said to me, "a party that hides in the dark has come to mix itself with the true people who desire only justice and freedom. A certain number of brigands have sprung up from I don't know where, paid by unknown hands, and have committed deplorable crimes by taking advantage of the movements stirred up by the ill-timed resistance of the Court and the privileged orders. We tried in vain to drive them away or punish them. They still came back. After the

capture of the Bastille they committed dreadful murders. They even threatened to pillage Paris. Only the immediate organisation of a national guard was able to put a check to their disorders.

"At the same time a small number of them appeared in the provinces, and as the false report of their near arrival spread abroad, it aroused such a great dread that the people took up arms at the same instant in all the communes (the Great Fear). We have made unsuccessful searches to find out the heads of these brigands, and the centre from which proceeded the fresh wave of alarming reports that sprang up everywhere at the same time in all the towns and villages of the kingdom. It is a problem that remains insolvable.

"In the month of October last (5th October), this band of villains took a hand in the disorders that broke out in Paris owing to a certain incident at Versailles. They gathered together all that could be found of the vilest and most corrupt in a capital. While I was vainly trying to re-establish order near the Hôtel de Ville and to pacify people's minds, I was informed that these wretches were on their way to Versailles at the head of a great crowd, and threatened the most sinister deeds. I was obliged to dash after them. When I got to Versailles, they had already besmirched the hall of the Assembly with their presence, and threatened the palace. The National Guard suppressed their fury and dispersed them. At first everything seemed to have been calmed. Unfortunately there had been an unwillingness to entrust the National Guard with more than a certain part of the outside posts, and towards the end of the night, the brigands got into the palace from the garden through a door which was not occupied by the National Guard. But for a small chance a dreadful crime might have been



COUNT LOUIS-PHILIPPE DE SÉGUR
By Ary Scheffer

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committed. Happily we arrived in time to prevent it, and the dastardly plot failed.

"The people had not taken part in that odious conspiracy. Nevertheless it was greatly exasperated, and could not be appeased except by persuading the King and his family to go to Paris.

"That is what I can truthfully tell you of those stormy scenes, which have mingled much sorrow with the lawful hopes of the immense majority of the nation for the establishment of a representative government."

The following day I saw another friend of mine, M. Alexandre de Lameth. He was one of the chiefs of the Patriotic Party. The picture of past events which he sketched for me differed very little from the one drawn by La Fayette.

Alexandre de Lameth was a firm and constant friend of constitutional freedom, and exercised with his two friends, Barnave and Duport, a fairly great influence over his party. Considered one of the chief founders of representative government in France, he soon became one of the presidents of the National Assembly. A remarkable speech of his on the public power of the free Estates procured for him the presidency of the Military Committee, of which he did the most important work. His brother Charles, as spirited in the tribune as in war, followed the same line as himself. The first popular excesses revolted them, but did not weaken their hope of seeing law and order established in spite of all obstacles.

Next day the Queen requested me to go and see her, and told me all the sufferings she had undergone. Both she and the King had had their hopes so often betrayed that they were too frequently inclined to

look for new advice. These frequent changes and succession of counsels and different systems, almost all opposed to one another, were, perhaps, not the least of the causes that increased their troubles and perils.

It would be impossible for me to say how deeply I was stirred when I saw again the Queen, whom I had left so happy, brilliant, beloved and surrounded with respect, and when she told me of the injustices that had been heaped upon her, the libellous attacks upon her reputation in the Collier affair, when she was accused of sending money from France to Austria, and of having dissuaded the King from his desire to satisfy the people with the necessary reforms and sacrifices.

"Yet we had always chosen for ministers those who were indicated by public opinion," she said to me. "But the King no sooner adopted their plans than we were assailed with complaints, cries and remonstrances against the very same ministers, whose advice was looked upon as dangerous. The *parlements*, nobles, clergy, and even the Court were at pains to persuade us that we were mistaken, our confidence in the wrong place, and that instead of the evils of the State being remedied they were being aggravated every day.

"You know how good the King is, how distrustful of himself, and that his only passion is for the welfare of France. He was always yielding, first to the Court, then to the *parlements*. We looked for other ways of doing good. They were not more successful. Then, as everybody was clamouring for the Estates General, the King convened them. They were hardly assembled when disagreement took hold of them. A frightful revolution broke out. They wanted to

annihilate our authority, the prerogatives of the clergy, and the rights of the nobles. As we thought it our duty to protect them, they stirred up the people against us. The King was forced to dismiss the regiments that guarded him. Our friends were obliged to flee.

"Paris took possession of the Bastille. And though the King would not allow a drop of blood to be shed, and was on the point of granting all that was asked of him, it was impossible to restore order. The people's passions became twice as violent. Finally our palace at Versailles was invaded by brigands. I only escaped death by rushing from my room to the King's. Several of our bodyguard were killed, and here you see us exposed to fresh dangers. What do you think of this deplorable state of things? Do you think we shall be able to get out of it?"

Such was approximately the story that stirred me too much to allow of my forgetting it. I have never seen more dignity in suffering, more sweetness in affliction. As the conversation lasted a long time, the Queen spoke to me in detail about the ill-behaviour of several persons who had done their utmost to harm her in the minds of the people and even in the heart of the King.

But she spoke without any bitterness of those of my friends who were at the head of the People's Party.

When I was presented to the King, I found him gloomy and depressed. He spoke very little, though kindly, about my negotiations, told me he would have pleasure in seeing me again and dismissed me.

I then fulfilled a further duty and gave an account of my mission to M. de Montmorin. Of all the pictures

of the revolution that had been drawn for me, he gave me the most melancholy.

"On the one hand," he said, "the people seem to want only a sort of democracy that is sure to lead to anarchy. It will soon take arms against those who are now trying to put the bridle of law upon it. On the other hand, the Court, aristocracy and all around the King obstinately reject everything that changes the monarchy from what it used to be. You know how much I love the King. He is just, upright, and good, but his goodness has no strength. He doesn't know how to resist either those he fears or those he loves. I have tried in vain to get him to follow any plan steadily. Ah! believe me, this unhappy struggle between a passionate popular party and a weak monarch will end in a republic."

My conversations with various people of different rank and views gave me a clear idea of my country's plight; and in order to complete my instruction I assisted at the meetings of the National Assembly.

I was somewhat astonished at seeing for the first time in a public assembly, cardinals, bishops, priests, generals, officers, nobles, farmers, magistrates, lawyers and tradesfolk, all mixed up together and seated in a jumble on the same benches without distinction of rank.

But after my first momentary surprise I was further astonished to find that this spectacle did not suffice to open the eyes of the partisans of the old régime. Equality was no longer a vain word resounding about their ears. It was there in the flesh, and could not escape being noticed. Nevertheless they doubted, and, perhaps, still doubt its existence.

The most notable difference between them and

those whose opinion I share is that we consider the revolution as an irrevocable fact, whereas they think it is not definitely accomplished. They forget that one can abolish what is only written in the laws, but not what is engraven in the practice of the people.

I spent my evenings going about the various circles of the town and revisiting the social haunts that had been the charm of my youth. I found them livelier, wittier and more animated than ever. It would have been impossible to find languor or boredom anywhere. Nevertheless, the gentleness, polish and urbanity which had been their characteristics for so long were now no more.

Political passions had invaded the drawing-rooms, transforming them into battling arenas, where the most hostile opinions were constantly at war. Discussion was dead. Disputing took its place. The only and everlasting topic of conversation was politics, so that little opportunity was given to the Arts, Muses and Gallantry to vary the theme. Everybody talked loudly and listened hardly at all. Bad temper revealed itself in tone and look. Often persons of opposing opinions would form two separate groups in the same drawing-room. In houses where people of identical views foregathered the conversation was no less heated nor were the subjects more varied. The only difference was a little less bitterness.

Women lost a good deal in this great change. Nothing suits them less than the passions of politics. Temper disfigures them, and anger makes them ugly. Nevertheless several of them were very brilliant in their conversations on philosophy. For instance, Mme de Staël. Few orators could have surpassed her in lyrical

inspiration and force of argument. She astonished, persuaded and carried her listeners with her.

There was always a great interest in these conversations; but it was always the same, and I looked in vain for the variety, cheerfulness, mutual forbearance and pleasant lightness which used to make them so attractive.

My brother, the Vicomte de Ségur, who was one of the most amiable men of his time and skimmed only the cream from any subject, said to me one day:

"I can't bear this revolution; it has spoilt my Paris for me."

I did not fail to observe the other classes of the Parisian population. With few exceptions they were animated by a burning love for the freedom that had been promised them. But they had a stronger passion for equality. It is impossible to imagine all the different aspects of Paris which met the surprised gaze of an observer at the time. I will quote an instance just to give one a slight idea of what I mean. One morning I was informed that my father, who was much weakened by his gout and wounds, had gone on foot to see his friend, Baron de Besenval, who was shut up in the Châtelet prison. I was also told that some evildoers had stirred up the people, and created a tumult around the prison. Anxious to know what had become of my father, I ran to rejoin him.

An immense crowd on the quay obstructed the roadway, in spite of the efforts of the National Guard, and filled the air with dreadful shouts. These madmen accused the authorities of treason, and the judges of slowness, and loudly demanded the prisoner's head.

It was only after a considerable time that I managed to fray a way for myself through the unbridled multitude. Arrived at the prison at last, I went in through a wicket in a low door. I went with disgust along the corridors of that haunt of vice and crime, and ascending the tower, I entered a fairly clean room, where I saw Baron de Besenval, not only calm and courageous, but entertaining with his usual gaiety my father, the Chevalier de Coigny, Comte de Pusigneux, my brother, and several pretty women, who frequently came with other friends to assuage his captivity. I could not help noticing the great contrast between the rage of the populace outside and the serenity within the prison, in spite of the howls of fury that reached our ears.

An hour later, when the tumult had died down and my father's carriage had come to fetch him, I continued my course. At the Place de Grève I found a great number of meetings which the police tried to disperse. Their object was to get as many as they could together in order to come up in force the next day and attack the prison again.

Disgusted with these clamours, I passed into the market. The sight that met my gaze was utterly different. There was the great market doing its business in the midst of the profoundest peace.

A little while after, I came to the Palace. I went into the garden, and found a man standing on a table and haranguing a great crowd. The demagogue was raving vehemently against the perfidy of the Court, the pride of the nobles, the greed of the rich, the laziness of the legislators. He stirred up the passions of his audience with the most incendiary suggestions, which were greeted with applause by some, and with rude remarks by others.

Disgusted by the speaker's impudence, I left and went to the Tuileries. The weather was superb. The terrace and avenues were full of peaceful strollers. Very pretty women, as varied in their dresses as the flowers of the garden beds, displayed their brilliant charms. It was like a feast day, and I might have thought I was a hundred leagues away from the rowdy scenes I had just witnessed.

Nevertheless, when I got to the turning bridge I saw a great number of people running towards the Champs Elysées. I followed them, and coming towards the great square, I saw a multitude of armed men. They were former soldiers of the Gardes Françaises, who were going to that meeting place in order to carry out a plan of revolt. Presently, M. de La Fayette, informed of their assembly, came up with several battalions of the National Guard and surrounded them. They immediately surrendered, and were promptly disarmed.

Back at home, I reflected very gravely on what I had seen, and in the hope of getting taken out of myself, I went to the Opera in the evening.

For the time being I was tempted to believe that I had merely been dreaming. The great audience, the charming music, the elegant variety of the ballets, the fresh decorations, the magic of the spectacle, the presence in the boxes of all the most distinguished people of the Court and town, the calm, and the gaiety on everybody's face and looks seemed to me like the very image of happiness, security and unity. Nobody seemed to realise that several quarters of Paris had just been the theatre of seditious upheavals and alarming scenes.

. . . . .

The following year saw a moment when the French nation seemed to be swayed, in a sort of intoxication, by the hope of a general reconciliation. Those were the enthusiastic days of the Federation, which took place on the Champs de Mars, in 1790.

After so many troubles and dissensions everyone seemed carried away by an ardent desire for mutual understanding and reconciliation. Therefore, notwithstanding the agitation of people's minds, the warfare of interests and the divergence of opinions, the gloomiest man could not have imagined the new and terrible revolution which two years later overthrew the throne and inaugurated, under the name of republic, the reign of terror and anarchy.

Nevertheless, even at the time I have just described, people began to grow alarmed at the animosity displayed by the two opposing parties. Yet the combat was still confined to the tribune, and nobody could have foreseen that the fire of those discussions would spread day by day throughout the whole earth, and that the civilised world would be divided, as it is to-day, into two opposing camps, one of which remains stubbornly attached to the banner of the old social order while the other marches under the standard of the new.

Both have a different language and dictionary. If they use the same words they attach opposite meanings to them, and might speak to one another for ever without understanding. The terms: Rights, Duties, Justice, Honour, Order, Liberty, Tolerance, Public Opinion, Public Interest, Political Virtue and Crime, have different meanings to both of these parties with no connection between the two.

Three great nations in Europe and a few weak governments still support the old system, while the rest

of Europe and all the nations of America, that is to say, the immense majority of the population of the two civilised hemispheres, have adopted the new principles. However slightly one may consider this matter or observe the rapid progress of the sciences, arts, industries and public wealth in free countries, it is not hard to foresee what the future holds.

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